

Procedure and Organization

Mr. Gibson: Mr. Speaker, I submit that the day the Prime Minister of this country is accused of facism is a sorry day for the country. This is a fruitless tactic on the part of the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether hon. members might control the volume of their voices. The hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) has the floor.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, the best thing I can do with the point of order raised, whoever raised it, is to ignore it because he, of all people—we know there are others like him—should know how governments with a majority operate. People like the hon. member know the extent of the control that exists within the Liberal party. They know it is impossible for a Liberal backbencher to speak when he has not been given permission to do so. This is even more the case now than it was in the past. Liberal backbenchers know they are not consulted about the legislation that will be brought forward by the government. They know, more than anyone else, the degree to which they are programmed. Today I read in the *Globe and Mail* that one Liberal backbencher was complaining of the fact his role here was valueless, except as a voting machine. They have to do what they are told. They vote yes or no when they are told to do so. Where is the element of individuality in members of the government party? I have talked to members of the Liberal party. This is a confidential matter and I shall not mention their names, but there are members sitting on the other side of the house who do not agree with the imposition of closure. They reject it because it is objectionable to their sense of parliamentary democracy. They object privately, but I am sure that when the vote comes tomorrow night not one of them will have the courage to stand up and vote as his conscience dictates.

They will not follow the dictates of their conscience because they are programmed by the Prime Minister to come up with a certain answer and vote as he tells them. Where is the individuality in the Liberal party? Where is the self-respect of those hon. members who have spoken with me and said they do not like closure? We will see where their self-respect is when the vote is taken tomorrow night.

An hon. Member: Name them.

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Mr. Howard (Skeena): My hon. friend says, "Name them". I tell him that I do not consider myself to be a squealer or a tattler of private conversations. My friends in the Liberal party may be used to that sort of activity, but I am not. If they have not the courage to vote as their conscience dictates tomorrow night, it will prove to the people watching us that the faces may change, the names may change, but those faces are just masks to cover the finks who are underneath. The same old gang is over there, the same old crowd. They have two policies, two faces and two things to say on every issue. They speak one way and vote another.

It is not necessary for me to disclose who these individuals are, because within their hearts they know whether what I have said applies to them. They whimper and moan privately that they did not really support the idea, but they have to support the government. We know that this sort of quiet moaning will go on, and we do not worry about it. It will continue within the government caucus with respect to the manner of operating parliament. This situation is more prevalent since the present Prime Minister assumed office. The method of operation of the government does not allow backbenchers' opinions to be expressed in debate. We do not know what happens behind the closed doors of the Liberal caucus.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I was sitting here the other day listening to some of the catcalls coming from the other side of the chamber, and it reminded me of a piece of doggerel that I believe applies right now. It is this:

Hark—what is that we hear?
If 'tis a voice, 'tis not too clear.
But if 'tis a Liberal saying,
Then only 'tis an ass that's braying.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena has the floor and should be allowed to continue his speech. He may have more poetry for the house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for elevating that work to the realm of poetry. I would not have put it in that class. What is important in terms of considering proposed rule 75c and the matter of closure is how the government and its caucus operates. We do not know to what pressures members on the other side are subjected in