

government side or the opposition side, should be muzzled when we talk about a matter of significant public interest.

There can be no doubt about the interest of the public on this issue. I do not know of any issue, whether it be capital punishment, abortion or bilingualism, about which I have received so much mail—not form letters such as we get on some issues, but letters from people who felt so strongly with respect to the matter that they decided to pick up a pen and write a letter in their own way. Some say that that has been induced by a campaign, but nonetheless those are sentiments expressed by Canadians whom the closure rule should not muzzle.

In so far as the management of the business of the House is concerned, let me just say that if there had been reasonable communication between the government House leader and the opposition House leader with respect to the length of time, we would have found, perhaps, that the debate would have finished much sooner than it will finish now. The hon. lady opposite—I am reluctant to call her that, because we will have a question of privilege—is shaking her head to say no. I happen to know that that is so.

I do not know who the messenger boy was that was sent over from the government side to determine how long this debate would last. If it was the whip of the government, then I can understand how the mistake was made. But if the government House leader had come across and spoken to his counterpart, as he calls him, concerning the number of speakers in the debate, I think he would have ascertained the length of the list of speakers. But more important than that is how this House can stand such stupidity. We have been standing stupidities as long as I can remember since 1972. As long as I have had to look at the government opposite, we have been standing inadequacies in management. But the one thing we should not do, and it is very important when an issue has had so little time for the type of real debate that counts—only 3½ hours, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield)—is to cut off the backbenchers of the House, members of the House who are not members of the government, members who represent people of varying opinions. In that respect this government is wrong and the House leader is wrong, and anyone who supports the government or its House leader is wrong: hon. members know that.

Some hon. members, as I look across the chamber, appear to feel somewhat badly about what has happened because they know how important this bill is and how strong the feelings are, but many of those members should have had some influence on the government House leader. What was so important that it could not, by natural attrition, have waited until Monday night—two debating days?

**Mr. McRae:** What is so great about Monday night?

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** The hon. member, as usual, does not know what he is talking about.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner (London East)):** Order, please. The hon. member should address the Chair.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** May I say, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member does not know what he is talking about, as usual. The proof of that was in the speech he made a little while ago.

#### *Time Allocation Motion*

**An hon. Member:** Are you speaking *ex cathedra*?

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I heard something from the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane). I expected something of greater significance. I think there is an extremely important aspect of the bill which should not be forgotten by members of the House when they rise to vote on this measure, and that is the matter referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, namely, the clarification of these guidelines at long last. How these rules were going to be applied was only clarified to the extent of the debate of the House, and we have had only 3½ hours of debate.

**An hon. Member:** And eight speakers.

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Whether there were eight, nine or ten speakers, there were only 3½ hours of debate, and I think this is a travesty of the rules. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has said, it has set back the business of consultation perhaps by a session with respect to the rationalization of the rules of this House. A shameful act has been committed today and this government, as well as those who support it, should be ashamed of themselves.

**Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State):** Mr. Speaker, I will try to avoid responding in kind to the type of argument or lack of argument advanced by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I will try to resist the temptation of discussing the merits or demerits of whips and other personalities in the House. In fact, I will try as best I can to stick to the procedures and methods of debate which have characterized this House for some time.

First of all, I would like to relate very briefly the history of the bill. I gave notice of the government's intention to introduce the bill on January 23—11 months ago. A ways and means motion was put before the House by the then minister of finance on April 17. Second reading started on May 8. The subject matter of the bill has been before the House and the people of this country, at least formally, for 11 months. Today, we are on the seventh day of debate. We have had 47 speeches. All that the motion before the House today does is to move this bill forward from second reading to committee stage.

I find it rather hollow to hear the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton talk about what was said or was not said in the discussions between House leaders, and I find it rather hollow to hear the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) talk about there being a better way. The fact is that there were discussions. This government made it absolutely clear that our preferred route was Standing Order 75A—an agreement amongst all members of the House. In fact, we did not get that agreement, and this is what the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) said. We then went to Standing Order 75B, and we could not get agreement on that either. I find it rather hypocritical for members of the official opposition to talk about the debate ending on Monday or about five o'clock this afternoon, or about some mythical date for which at no point yesterday was there any support and of which there was no mention.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!