

Business of the House

concluded between the various governments and today because Bill C-83 amending the Criminal Code is extremely complex and difficult. This bill is thus giving rise to strong popular pressures against the government and this is why the closure has again been moved.

According to our rules, Mr. Speaker, there are three procedures to regulate the proceedings of this House: First, under rule 75A, requiring the unanimous consent of the House or the parties; secondly under rule 75B, requiring the majority and thirdly under rule 75C which provides for unilateral action by the government which lays down the law for lack of a consensus or a majority.

After some very cheap consultations, the government has jumped immediately to take unilateral action and they are forcing their will upon Parliament by using Standing Order 75C and imposing the closure of debate. What are the facts, Mr. Speaker? In fact, 28 members have spoken on second reading of Bill C-83 in the House, which represents a percentage of 10.6 per cent of the members to have spoken on Bill C-83, the bill dealing with gun control. Surely 10 per cent does not amount to abuse, and no Canadian will accept the government's argument that members on both sides of the House have abused when only 10 per cent of them have risen to speak on this legislation. No Canadian will accept this argument.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker,—

Mr. Roy (Laval): You will speak in committee.

Mr. Fortin: —I would ask the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Roy) to shut up. He should have risen before. Secondly, 11 Liberal members have spoken on the legislation, 11 Progressive Conservative members have also spoken, as well as four NDP members and three Social Crediters. That means that as many Liberals as Progressive Conservatives have spoken on the legislation. Therefore the argument of the Liberals who want to muzzle the Progressive Conservatives is absolutely senseless. The two parties have had an equal number of speakers. The NDP have had 11 and we, the Social Crediters, have had only three or four, half the number of Liberals or Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, I say the federal Liberals behave exactly like their provincial counterparts in Quebec, and I draw the attention of colleagues from other provinces. In Quebec, we have a premier who gets a kick out of dividing people through fear of the PQ. He thus obtains the unanimity in the National Assembly. In Quebec, there is no majority any more, there is no longer any democracy. There is a dictatorship that works, a system of full patronage and here there are attempts to divide the opposition the better to reign. Mr. Speaker, that is the prevailing situation. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) could have risen on Standing Order 75C if the opposition had been filibustering this debate, but such is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals cannot therefore accuse the Conservatives nor the NDP nor the Crediters of listing too many speakers. They cannot accuse the opposition because they have had as many speakers as the opposition. As a matter of fact, 40.6 per cent of the speakers during the second reading debate, which is a discussion on principles, were Liberals and we agree that the Liberals should have the floor, Mr. Speaker, we are not opposed to that, we want backbenchers on the government side to

[Mr. Fortin.]

stand up, but we request the same right for the opposition. We request the right to express ourselves.

● (2050)

Mr. Speaker, when opposition or public opinion begins to be felt, when the opposition begins to speak up and when the public gets interested, that is when they are gagged.

Mr. Guay (Lévis): What are you doing!

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, that shows one thing: the hon. member for Lévis (Mr. Guay) never stops interrupting me, he is not brave enough to stand up but he is enough of a coward to interrupt me.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp)—

Mr. Guay (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): The hon. member for Lévis (Mr. Guay) on a question of privilege.

Mr. Guay (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, I quite understand that the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) is in the running for the leadership, but when one starts calling others "cowards", Mr. Speaker, that is going a bit too far. I demand that the hon. member for Lotbinière treat the others as they do him. I will not allow being treated so shabbily. I demand that he withdraw his words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. If the word "coward" was spoken, then I did not hear it. If it was uttered, I admit that it is harsh, strong, but I did not hear the word the hon. member has just used.

An hon. Member: That is what he said.

An hon. Member: Withdraw.

Mr. Guay (Lévis): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. I want the hon. member to understand me well. As I did not hear the word, I shall take his question as notice, and we can look at *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Guay (Lévis): It is a matter of personal privilege. If you did not hear the word, then I feel that tomorrow will be too late because the words will have been consigned to *Hansard*. I request that the hon. member withdraw his words immediately. The hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) knows himself what he said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. The hon. member knows full well that when the Speaker does not hear or understand the words that are spoken, he can reserve the right to pass judgment the next day after having read *Hansard*.

The hon. member for Lotbinière.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, if the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp) invokes Standing Order 75C today, that proves two things: the first, that he does not have the leadership required to conduct negotiations in the House