

Extension of Sittings

Ms. Copps: You are not letting the matter proceed.

Mr. Harvard: Why do you not just close Parliament down?

Mr. Lewis: I could go on and repeat all these deathless quotes, but if my friends opposite want to get to debate on the Bill, why do we not debate the Bill? I do not think the case has to be put any more strongly. I suggest that we get on with a vote on this motion. Let us debate the Bill.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week you had the honour to table our new Standing Orders, renumbered and reorganized. At our first sitting of this House, you gave us a copy of the Standing Orders, explained that there was a lot of hard work put into this reorganization and renumbering. We were happy because it does make more sense and it is easier to follow. But today we have a Government that says about those Standing Orders: "We don't think they are worth very much. We are going to make them disappear somewhere into the background. We are going to reinstate our position", which is limited debate, closure on debate, bang, whang, the Opposition doesn't count. The Government has a majority and, therefore, it has its own way. Those Members call that democracy. We call that dictatorship.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the Tories have implemented with a certain arrogance that might even be malicious . . .

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: I am getting all the little Quebeckers excited! You over there know what arrogance is—you have acted that way long enough!

Mr. Speaker, the saying they go by is, "The end justifies the means." That is a proverb you certainly know and it is the principle of brute force. According to this principle, the end sought can excuse the wrong done to the one who suffers from it. The Government does not like the Standing Orders of the House. They say that they cannot work with those Standing Orders, that they cannot even understand them, that they cannot go by them. So they drop the Standing Orders and table in the House a proposal to limit time for debate.

Unable as we also said to manage the time of the House, the Government is trying with its majority to impose a provision that would have us pass within a few days what we consider to be a bad deal for the country. So Members must not be heard criticizing the Government. No! We must not criticize! The Opposition should

not criticize! It is not right to criticize the Government. We must admit, Mr. Speaker, that they won the election, but we already know that! But even so, two Opposition parties in Canada got 57 per cent of the vote and these 57 per cent of the voters say no to the Mulroney-Reagan trade agreement, no to the deal, and it is our duty to tell this Government that with 43 per cent of the vote, it cannot continue with this mean-spirited arrogance of imposing its views, its way of seeing things, its methods, of using the Conservative bludgeon. That is what it is—a bludgeon. The Government is proposing to use it.

It is being used to lessen and cut off debate. It is used to ride roughshod over the Opposition, to undo what you would maintain, Mr. Speaker, the few powers a minority can have. The Conservative majority says that they will proceed speedily and have done with this question. But we tell them, we say again to them that we want to debate the motion. We want to debate this question and we are ready to do so. I have with me 81 colleagues who are prepared to make speeches today, tomorrow, on the weekend and next week and after Christmas to make this Government clearly understand that it is mistaken in making a proposal like this one.

• (1220)

[*English*]

This is the third time in 100 years that the Tories have put a motion to suspend the rules in order to force their way on Parliament. The first time was in 1888. A Conservative Government put a motion to suspend the rules in order to force a Bill through Parliament.

The most recent sad episode, of course, was in the spring of this year, in June, when the Government had a motion similar to the one before us today, forcing an extension of sittings into the summer and showing with great incompetence how it could not manage the time of the House.

The Government had the House sit in July and August until 10 o'clock at night. We called it legislation by exhaustion. The Government tried to exhaust us. It did not succeed. It exhausted its Members.

Now we have a proposal that seeks to accommodate those Members whom we did not see here in July or August. They were somewhere in the boondocks, sunning themselves. Here we have the same proposal to accommodate that same gang so that they can go somewhere south and sun their buns in the sun again, in