

Extension of Sittings

It was back in March of 1883 that the Standing Orders were last suspended and now they are being suspended again.

Mr. Benjamin: A Tory Government then, too.

Mr. Riis: It was a Conservative Government, was it not?

Mr. de Jong: I believe it was.

Mr. Riis: I guess we should not be puzzled by these antics, then. First we had the suspension of the rules in 1883. I referred earlier to the storming of the Chair by the Conservatives during the constitutional debate. I failed to mention that in 1982 it was again the Conservatives who shut down Parliament for more than two weeks.

Mrs. Sparrow: Because of the NEP.

Mr. Riis: It does not matter why. In other words, the ends justify the means? The Conservatives say they have a right to do that. I like that. They say they were angry at the NEP. The Liberals brought that in, they did not like it, so they can shut down Parliament. That is fine. Because they do not like legislation it is all right for them to shut down Parliament. Because the NDP and Liberals are concerned about the trade deal we cannot have more than a five day debate. What nonsense, absolute nonsense.

Mr. Gormley: Louder.

Mr. Riis: It is typical coming from a Conservative, though. They felt they could close down the Parliament of Canada for a couple of weeks. That was all right because they were angry at the Government.

They were angry at the Speaker so they could storm the Chair and make a mockery out of that position. Harvie Andre was there, leading the pack, screaming and yelling. Total abuse of the parliamentary system. So why are we puzzled today when the Conservatives once again act on their view of democracy which we call tyranny, a dictatorship.

Our Parliament is based on the Mother of Parliaments. I thought all of us had a deep respect for the parliamentary system where we recognized the role of the Opposition.

Mr. Andre: We are following tradition.

Mr. Riis: I know the Minister dislikes opposition Parties. Maybe he should go to the Soviet Union or Chile. He will feel more comfortable in one of those countries.

There are still Members in this House who cherish the idea of Parliament. There are still Members who cherish the ideal of a Government and opposition Party. The opposition Parties are here to keep the Government honest. To do that, you need to have a Parliament in session and working. The Conservatives who said in 1982 that they were going to shut down Parliament are the same Conservatives who are saying today that they are going to bring in closure and time allocation. They do not want debate on this. They do not like the Standing

Orders and they are prepared to suspend them for now. The last time the Government did that was in March of 1883.

Mr. Lewis: I remember it well.

Mr. Benjamin: You look like you do.

Mr. Riis: Here we go again.

My colleague's second question was what is the alternative to the Government introducing this motion? The alternative is the Chair. You will know that Standing Order No. 5 gives the Speaker authority to recall Parliament whenever he or she decides it is in the best interests of the country to do that. If we were to recess as the calendar says we ought to, on June 30, and on July 5 or July 10 the Government was able to make a case that it was in the nation's interest that the Speaker recall Parliament, you have the right to do that. We have unanimously given you that right. We say we trust the Speaker because the Speaker represents all Members of the House. The Speaker is elected by all Members. You represent the Government, the Opposition and the independent Members. We put that faith in you and in your position. Yet the Government has ripped that out of your hands. It knows best. It is Big Brother. It does not have to listen to the Speaker or convince the Speaker to sit during the summer months.

Mr. Rossi: Very dangerous.

Mr. Riis: Yes, but that is the situation we are dealing with.

I simply want to say to the people listening to this debate that our Standing Orders give the Chair the right to sit all of July and August if you feel that is in the best interests of the country. We like rules and regulations and traditions and practices. We adopted them unanimously. That is why when the Government says it knows best we become very edgy. After all, that is the same Government that negotiated the trade deal. I tell you that we are far from convinced that is in the best interests of our country. We know it is in the best interests of the U.S. but we have yet to see any evidence it is in the best interests of Canada or Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The period for questions and comments has now expired. Resuming debate.

● (1650)

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, the Government has today suggested that its facility in dealing with the trade deal with the United States has perhaps been the crucial reason which has forced it to take the step which has so cut across parliamentary traditions which have been with us for over a century. As our House Leader said, we have not seen the rules of this House suspended in this way since 1883.

Yet it has happened. It has happened in order to sell us out to the United States in a trade deal which is so devastating to the future freedom of Canada that the Legion convention meeting here today should be marching on this Parliament and