

question shall be decided in accordance with the rules of British parliamentary practice." Our rules, as you are quite aware, Mr. Higgins, are silent on that point ... and an examination of the rules of the House of Assembly would reveal a like defect. There is nothing to be found in these rules covering closure motions, and therefore, under the concluding portion of standing order 54 I am forced to decide the matter in the light of British parliamentary practice.

On that point I would direct your attention to Sir Erskine May, pages 450-51, in which he points out that the Chair should intervene in a closure motion where it is felt that it is an abuse of the rules of the house or infringes on the rights of the minority, and in the discharge of this duty the discretion of the Chair is absolute, and is not open to dispute. There is no appeal to the House on that point. As you are fully aware, it is purely a guillotine or knifing-off procedure, which is calculated to knife off and shut off debate when put and carried. Now, I should direct your attention to the fact that I got notice of this motion on Friday afternoon. Of course, Saturday and Sunday we were not sitting, and it therefore meant that I received notice of it two clear days ago. In further view of the fact that my attention has been drawn to the desire of some members to speak, Mr. Higgins, on this business, who have been prevented by illness and transportation and other defects from attending, and who therefore have not had an opportunity of addressing themselves on the business in question, I feel that a closure motion ought not to be put at this time.... There must come a time when the responsibility for accepting this motion will rest with the House ... my tentative opinion is that I will in all probability put the motion at the beginning of Friday afternoon's session.<sup>1</sup> That would leave members

the opportunity of speaking this afternoon, this evening if we sit, tomorrow afternoon and tomorrow evening. Beyond that I am not prepared to go ... I want to inform members now that it is my intention at the moment to put this closure motion to the House at the resumption of business at 3 o'clock on Friday, and I would ask members to take due notice and govern themselves accordingly. So if you don't mind, Mr. Higgins ...

**Mr. Higgins** I don't mind, sir. It is not my intention to close off the debate today, but it would be fair to ask you if the members speaking after Mr. Smallwood would conclude before Friday, and then you would be prepared to put it at that time.

**Mr. Chairman** Oh, quite definitely. You will recall that I assured Mr. Smallwood that he would be given the opportunity of replying once before the debate on the business terminated. Mr. Smallwood is now availing himself of that right. In addition to that there are other members who have not spoken, and I feel that a reasonable time should be given after the motion reaches me. As far as I know it is the desire of this Convention to complete its work by the 31st of this month ... and if we are to deal with the rest of the business on the order paper it follows that a decent interval between the debate now before the Chair and the 31st of the month must necessarily be preserved; therefore the proposal of a closure motion at this time is not improper, in fact it is quite proper. The only thing we have to make sure of is that it is not jumped on any members that may be absent. The motion is quite fair, and I think the house will agree that in deferring it until Friday members are quite well informed in this respect and it cannot be argued that they had no opportunity.

**Mr. Higgins** Do you need it seconded now, sir?

**Mr. Chairman** No, I am deferring it until Friday.

#### Report of the Ottawa Delegation Proposed Arrangements for the Entry of Newfoundland into Confederation Committee of the Whole

**Mr. Smallwood** Mr. Chairman, I understood Major Cashin to say that 1,200 civil servants would be laid off under confederation. Now what are the facts? Our government at the present time employs directly 4,615 civil servants. Under confederation 1,947 of them will be taken over by the federal government, and lucky persons they

will be. These 1,947 civil servants ... are as follows:

256	from Customs
1031	" Posts & Telegraphs
31	" Assessor's Department
15	" Defence
4	" Consolidated Fund

<sup>1</sup>January 16, 1948.