

January 14, 1991

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I would like to speak very firmly in favor of the cloture rule. To me the cloture rule is central to the operation of the democratic process, and without a real cloture rule, you will be at the whim of the minority. And some people in here are thinking, but we are not at the whim of the minority because we have an existing rule, that is, we suspend the rules. But that is not true and I want to go back and analyze what we do right now just a little bit and I hope the existing members will indulge me because I want to speak primarily to the freshmen, who I am sure have no idea what we are talking about right now. But if they are asked to vote on a new system versus the old system, then it behooves us all to remind ourselves what the old system is, and the old system is, basically, this, that if you want cloture, you file a motion to suspend the rules, all the appropriate rules that need to be suspended, and you move to advance the bill without further debate. Okay. Now the key thing that you have to remember in order to understand how this rule works is that that motion to suspend the rules must come after all filed amendments to the bill. I want to repeat that, that motion for cloture must come after all filed amendments to the bill, if I understand the rule correctly. That being the case, if you are wise enough to file numerous amendments to the bill before the introducer of the bill or the promoter of the bill files a motion to suspend, then you can keep the debate going on indefinitely. Unless there has been some change in the interpretation of the rules in the last couple of years, I know that when I was here before and Reverend Sileven was here and we were participating in a filibuster, we had so many amendments filed that it could never come up. And so there must be some mechanism that ensures that cloture will come up at some point in time, at some reasonable point in time, otherwise, you are always there at the mercy of an intelligent member of the minority position on any particular debate. The cloture rule... a cloture rule that is reasonable in nature, and I think that this one is very reasonable in nature because ask yourself, just ask yourself from your own experience, how many times since you have been here has eight hours of debate at each stage been not enough for all reasonable amendments, and if your experience has been as my experience has been, the answer is that is plenty of time for all reasonable amendments. It is a modest proposal because of that time limit. It is a modest proposal because it requires a two-thirds vote, and if you fail to get the two-thirds vote, it is off the agenda for the day. So its use