

thought, to ruminate on them, and to talk to their members of Parliament, their elected representatives, to give their feelings so that the member could come back here and in a speech to the House or in a representation on committee could have input on behalf of his or her constituents.

That has not happened. If we go through the free trade debate in late December 1988, we see that we had closure at every stage of that bill. The goods and services tax, perhaps one of the most unpopular tax bills in Canadian history, is opposed, the polls show, by 85 per cent of the people of Canada. Yet we had this government bringing in closure at every stage of the bill, to the extent that on third reading my leader, who would have been the first speaker for the New Democratic Party at third reading, was not even provided the opportunity of making her remarks on the record.

This is an example of a government with a majority that thumbs its nose not only at the opposition but at the people of Canada. It says: "We were given a majority to Govern and we are going to govern regardless of what the people of Canada think or want". The government also says: "We have been given a majority. We know what is best for the people of Canada. That is what we are going to do and we want to do it in the fastest possible manner without giving people an adequate opportunity to properly digest what we are doing".

The goods and services tax was an example where a schedule was set out and be darned if they were not going to keep to that schedule regardless of the fact that people wanted more information, regardless of the fact that bureaucrats were having trouble keeping up with the legislation and keeping up with the changes as the problems were pointed out in the legislation.

What we have before us are changes to the Standing Orders. Perhaps the majority of people in Canada do not understand exactly what they are; they were just brought before us in late March. They show once again an erosion of the democratic process, an erosion of what I have talked about in history as my belief of what this place is supposed to be about: democracy and the opportunity for people of Canada to have a way.

Government Orders

We do not live in a dictatorship, although I am sure that is what our Prime Minister would prefer us to have because then he would not have to listen to the opposition at all. When I look at these changing standing order rules, I have become somewhat concerned that my voice as an opposition member of Parliament is being cut off.

The people of my riding are not going to be given an adequate opportunity to be heard through me in Parliament because of some of these restructuring changes.

It is interesting, in looking at a recent article in *The Ottawa Citizen* this morning by Frank Howard, that he refers back to when this government first took office in 1984. Having spent a long time in opposition, it was very aware of the difficulties of the opposition and the need to give opposition members a voice and to make them feel that they were responding to their constituents' needs and wishes. I would like to quote from that article. Mr. Howard said:

The McGrath reforms gave committees more freedom to initiative inquiries to call witnesses.

They were brought in after the Tories had been out of power for most of the previous two decades and still felt sympathy for the ordinary members of Parliament.

• (1250)

He quotes McGrath and says:

I wanted to put in place a system where being a member of Parliament would be seen to be an end to itself and not a means to an end.

Mr. Howard goes on to say:

Too often, MPs felt like nobodys in Ottawa, unless they became cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries.

I for one want to have input on behalf of my constituents while I am elected member of Parliament. I want to have opportunity to speak here in the House and to be able to put my case to the House of Commons in a 20-minute speech. I want my party to be able to have the same amount of time as the other two parties in so far as the leaders are concerned. I would like to have the ability to have input from my constituents into committees such as was originally set up by the committee structure and improved by the McGrath commission.