

*Supply**[Translation]*

Again I would like to commend the hon. member for Rosemont for his motion of February 25, 1982. What I am proposing is very similar in substance to what he is proposing, except that he went further than I did, he proposed a solution. The solution is open to discussion, but what is important is making the government truly accountable to Parliament. This is as far as we can go in a modern society, Mr. Speaker, if we put aside exaggeration or the make-believe suggestion that it is possible for 282 Members of Parliament to make every year a detailed examination of the estimates for some 30 departments. A far better approach, Mr. Speaker, is to examine departmental structure and long-term direction within the framework of a study that can extend over a year, with the staff needed, the resources needed, resources to travel, to call for witnesses and experts. Then hon. members could really pass judgment and influence long-term policy.

*[English]*

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill):** Mr. Speaker, I have just a few comments to make about the debate. Perhaps I should begin with a reference to the parliamentary impasse that we have just experienced and which is part and parcel of the reason for the debate tonight. I think it was a good idea for the official opposition to provide Parliament with an opportunity to debate parliamentary reform.

I should like to reinforce what my leader said this afternoon about the attitudinal dimension of parliamentary reform. As good as the rules for human relationships might be, without the proper spirit we will not be able to proceed to the kind of reform and the kind of Parliament that members have envisioned this afternoon.

There were people on both sides of the issue, of course. There were those who supported the ringing of the bells and those who thought that what the Tories were doing was a terrible thing. People appeared to judge the impasse according to their political loyalties. However, there were a great many people who simply felt that nothing had changed.

As we moved into the final day of the impasse it rather scared me that nobody seemed to care. The relevance of Parliament was being demonstrated by the bells rather than being created by the bells. Among my constituents I could not find a sense that the decision-making process had been interrupted. Because there is a feeling in the country that the real decisions are not made in Parliament in any case and in so far as that is the perspective behind the Conservative motion, I think it is a good one. People do feel that Parliament does not have as much power or relevance as it ought to.

Personally, as a new Member of Parliament, I am dissatisfied with a number of things. Some good reforms have been suggested vis-à-vis committees and I should like to see them go through. I find committees to be a sort of make-work projects for Members of Parliament. We have the impression that we are doing something, but it is a false belief. Committees are run by the government. The people who appear before the committees get a false impression too, as they believe they are speaking to people who can do something when in fact they

cannot. That is unfair to the witnesses and their perspective of the democratic process.

Just recently I read or heard something about the Prime Minister's famous comment about Members of Parliament being nobodies. I wish I could remember the source. The problem is not that Members of Parliament are nobodies. When we are in our constituencies we are somebodies; it is only in Parliament that we are nobodies. The minute we walk off the Hill, as far as our constituents and others are concerned we are somebodies because thousands and thousands of people voted to put us here. The minute we walk into this building we become nobodies because of the way things are structured and the attitude of the government party that has been in power too long. In all fairness, I must say that it is destructive of the democratic spirit for the Liberal Party to have been in power as long as it has. But the point that has to be made is that it is only when we are here that we are nobodies.

The point made earlier today by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark) about party discipline is a good one. If there is absolutely no possibility that through good argument and good debate or whatever we have to offer in this chamber we can change anyone's mind on anything, then there is no point to debate. There is no point to it if everyone has his mind made up on how he is going to vote on everything before the debate begins. This seems to me to vitiate the whole notion of what a debate is, particularly now that people give set speeches. I understand that in the "olden days" there used to be a little bit more actual debate when members asked questions of each other. But that tends to spoil the set speech that a member may want to send back to his riding for broadcast on cable TV. There seems to be an unwritten rule that this sort of thing is not done any more because it spoils the entertainment value of the speech.

That brings me to another point, Mr. Speaker, the dimension of modern politics that has been left out of this whole debate, the media. There are other actors in the democratic process who also have a responsibility to ensure that Parliament as an institution and as a symbol of democracy is held in appropriate respect. An incident that occurred earlier today demonstrates this. After the Leader of the Opposition spoke, I was outside the chamber and I noticed that there was a bunch of cameramen waiting to interview him. Doing the good thing, he sat and listened to the government House leader make his speech; then he listened to the leader of the New Democratic Party make his speech. Meanwhile the cameramen were going crazy because they wanted him to come out for an interview. As I walked by, I heard a cameraman say, "Enough of this crap about democracy; I have deadlines to meet".

● (2120)

**Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** Where are they now?

**Mr. Blaikie:** Exactly, where are they now? The Press Gallery is empty, and I have looked at an empty Press Gallery more than I want to think about since coming here. People say