

*Government Orders*

government is doing, and understand what they like about it and what they do not like about it so that they can exercise their responsibilities as citizens to provide comment on what the government is doing and to judge it at the next election?

It is this House that is the medium by which Canadians are informed of the actions of the government and the meaning of those actions. It is by the House that the media inform Canadians. Without this House sitting, the agenda of the media is set by the government and the actions it takes outside this House.

That may be very convenient for the Prime Minister and it may be very convenient for the cabinet. I suggest it is not in the best interests of the Canadian public.

There are serious issues confronting this country. Close to four million Canadians will be unemployed this year. This government wants to be out of the House every fourth week so it does not have to confront that fact.

The economy of this country is in decline and this government wants to be out of the House one week out of every four so it does not have to deal with that issue. We are losing jobs in this country on a daily basis. No wonder the government does not want to be here to answer the questions of Canadians and the opposition about that fact.

We have seen what instability does. We have seen what on-again, off-again democracy does in the weeks since December. We have seen this government fail to call back Parliament at the regular scheduled time and we have seen this House in the ignominious position of debating the merits of a war, after our Prime Minister and our government had already committed Canadian lives to a war.

We have seen the House then adjourn. We have seen it come back weeks later for a very short period of time, and then off again. Now we see that we are going to be out of here again for another month. We only have to look at what has happened in those months since December to know that democracy does not work when you have a democracy you can switch on and off like a light switch.

I happen to sit on the environment committee. That is a committee that has done excellent work over the last

two years. It has produced three very progressive reports on the condition of the atmosphere. There were strong recommendations and policy for the government with all party concurrence. Yet, that committee has met less than one-half the times it was scheduled to meet in the period of time the government has been pulling us into Parliament and pushing us out of Parliament. It has not once looked at the spending estimates for the environment department so that this government can be held accountable on how it is allocating the resources of Canadians to protect the environment, an issue that Canadians say is their highest priority for the use of their resources.

• (1640)

When is the environment committee going to have an opportunity to meet, to review those estimates and to have the minister in front of it and in front of Canadians to account for the priorities he is setting for the environment? It is not going to happen. Again, for the second year in a row, there is not going to be a report from the environment committee to Parliament on the appropriateness of those estimates and the appropriateness of the priorities for spending on the environment.

That is what happens when we get a Parliament in, Parliament out revolving door. That is what we are going to have.

I do not know about other members of Parliament, but I am pleasantly surprised by the number of my constituents who regularly and consistently watch Question Period. If they do not see it in the afternoon because they happen to be retired and have the opportunity to see it, they watch the reruns at night. They use the watching of Question Period to contact me about issues, with information and with their views. Yet, when Question Period is on this week but not on next week, I think we interfere with that rhythm of people keeping track of Parliament, keeping track of what each and every one of us is doing and holding us accountable to them for our actions in Parliament and our actions on their behalf.

In these changes to the Standing Orders we are told that committees are going to be able to call technical witnesses when they are reviewing bills. We are not here to pass bills because they are technically correct. We are here to pass them hopefully because they are in the best interest of the country and because they reflect some kind of policy and some kind of forward looking agenda for where Canada is heading.