

*Government Orders*

When we returned and looked, for example, at the case of the reorganization of the committee system in the House of Commons, we found ourselves into one battle after another to make sure that people across this country had an opportunity to discuss the issues before a committee. We have found out that they are all cut back and have less of a mandate. They are not able to generate the discussions we thought they would at one time.

In the case of international human rights, we found it in fact to be cut entirely from the mandate of the human rights committee. I know there are many Canadians and groups such as Amnesty International, which yesterday celebrated its 30th anniversary, which look forward to having a chance to speak to a small group of parliamentarians in the subcommittee on international human rights. The fact that opportunity is being taken away from them because of the change in rules and the change in the structure of committees is something that will be regretted in the months to come.

I know too that in the health and welfare committee there is a great deal of concern. There are huge areas to be discussed, from poverty, to changes in the health care and income support systems in this country. If they do not have a broad representation from all the parties in the House of Commons and if they do not have an opportunity to listen to the groups coming in, they will be pushed very hard to develop the expert reports we have seen from the House of Commons committees in the last few years.

The House reconvened last week after the Speech from the Throne. I guess one of the reasons why the government does not wish to have this House sit as regularly as it did before is that it is watching the decline in the fortunes of the government since the House was reconvened. If we think back, it was only a few weeks ago that the House heard the Governor General in the Senate chamber deliver the Speech from the Throne, outlining all the commitments that the government was going to be making.

Then we found out within a few hours that in fact no matter what the government's publicly stated agenda was, it was breaking rules on immigration and the Prime Minister was on a trip overseas. It is similar to the one of the last Conservative Prime Minister whose government fell around the jokes created by a trip overseas to Asia.

Here is our Prime Minister right now making as many errors and showing as bad judgment as his colleague, the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs. It is a government which has been plagued by stupid mistakes, by bad judgment, by not understanding the true wishes of Canadians to be governed responsibly. In changing the institutions, it simply wished to restructure the House instead of dealing with the real issue: if Canadians had a chance to deal with this government directly in a general election, these guys would be dismissed out of hand as being one of the most inappropriate and undemocratic governments seen in the history of this country.

• (1800)

Although we have to struggle to deal with the government every day in Question Period and try to show Canadians just how incompetent it is in so many areas, we must remind the country that we, too, share in the desire to see that the House is restored to being the focal point of public debate and to see that the rules are restored in a way that makes it not only easy to criticize the government, but easier to work together as a team on all sides of this House to produce good legislation.

The government decided to ask us to restore legislation, and it actually did that with several pieces of legislation, including the Railroad Act, the Young Offenders Act, an act to provide for the dissolution or transfer of certain Crown corporations, an act to establish a federal Environmental Assessment Process, an act to amend an act to provide for the appointment of a port warden. Some of these are small pieces of legislation and others are very important.

The government is operating in an undemocratic fashion by pushing these pieces of legislation forward for the last two years, rather than by going back and facing the basic faults in its legislation and facing the very serious and thoughtful amendments put forward by other members of the House of Commons, including my colleagues from Newfoundland and from Kingston and the Islands. The government wishes to start as if these amendments were never presented and the legislation is perfect.

The role of the opposition is to be a thoughtful opposition and a thoughtful critic of what the government is trying to do. But the lack of opportunity, as posed to us in this particular case, makes it very difficult for an opposition party to continue to deal with the