

Extension of Sittings

● (1450)

Let us tell the one million people who are unemployed today how they will be helped. Let us guarantee to them that that is in fact the case. We have more than four million Canadians who are poor and who are working at minimum wage. Out of those four million there are over one million children who are involved. How well can their condition be improved? If their condition will be improved, let us set it down clearly. How will our seniors, our youth, our women, our northern and native people, and our new Canadians profit from this agreement?

I would suggest that if the Government is really concerned about the people of Canada, the concerns which have been raised by these various groups and some of the concerns I have just pointed out need to be addressed. These concerns need to be reflected in some sort of mechanism such as legislation.

What the people of Canada really want from Government and from the Opposition is the truth about this trade deal. They want us to share honestly with them the information we have. They want copies of the studies the Government has. They want to be told clearly and unequivocally about the difficulties that lie ahead. They want to know if the definition of subsidies will cause serious difficulties. They want to understand more about what is meant by the process of harmonization. They want to identify the industries that will fall or suffer seriously as a result of this agreement.

I think you will agree that our Canadian population is, generally speaking, quite politically literate. They are really vitally interested in the politics of this nation and where we are going as a country. I think they increasingly resent what they perceive as being manipulated, not being given the whole truth, all the facts, being treated as if they are not knowledgeable enough or intelligent enough to understand what we as politicians supposedly understand. In fact, I would suggest that they are insulted and angered by such an approach. I would venture that they will no longer tolerate such treatment.

Canadians want their Government and their opposition Parties to do everything in their power to protect them. Personally, I will do everything in my power to protect all my constituents and all Canadians.

Mr. John F. Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, when I see the Minister of State for Transport (Mrs. Martin), as I understand her position to be in the House, I am inclined to begin with a discussion of the Heliport in Victoria, but I will save that for another occasion.

The topic that we are supposed to be discussing, as I understood the Order of the Day, was the Government's decision to use its majority to change the rules of this House. I find it something of a shame that those of us who are making our first speech here are required to speak to this particular topic.

We come here with a deep sense of excitement and honour at the opportunity we have to serve our country in this place. We listened carefully to the Speaker's words yesterday when he ruled in order the motion that we have before us. I am disappointed the Government did not take the very broad hint or strong words the Speaker gave to this House. He said of the motion before us that while it is in order, he found it was a hard case. I quote from page 78 of *Hansard*:

"I am not pleased as your presiding officer to put this question to the House; but it would be bad law to do otherwise."

He is saying that it is in order for the Government to introduce this motion, but it is a bad motion that is being put.

Let us look at precisely what the Government is asking this House to approve. It is not asking the House to approve the Free Trade Agreement or the enabling legislation. It is asking this House to change the Standing Orders. To paraphrase the Hon. House Leader for the Government (Mr. Lewis), it is changing three rules.

First, it is extending the sittings on four days a week from 6 p.m. to midnight. It is wiping out the rule that the House would have no evening sittings.

Second, it is changing the regular House schedule by extending beyond December 22, this session of Parliament. Normally, we would rise on December 22, and return on January 15.

Third, it changes the requirement that this very complicated piece of legislation go to a smaller legislative committee and provides that it be discussed clause by clause in Committee of the Whole which gives to the Government far greater opportunity to shorten the debate.

Those are the three things that are being proposed by the Government. I come here, I admit, as a new Member, but it is my understanding that the Standing Orders are the constitution of this House. The Standing Orders have been developed over a number of years and, in particular, these provisions were the result of the McGrath reform introduced at the urging of a former member of the Conservative Party and Conservative caucus.