

Motions

Mr. Blaikie: —it should not send the Minister for International Trade. She thinks she has a record as a negotiator.

Miss Carney: Your provincial NDP thinks so.

Mr. Blaikie: She can come to an agreement with almost anyone if she is willing to give them exactly what they want.

Mr. Rodriguez: She is a patsy.

Miss Carney: Confusion in the NDP ranks.

Mr. Blaikie: If you are willing to say on the one hand that this is our final offer, but on the other hand if you do not like it a couple of weeks down the road we will make another offer.

Mr. Friesen: Tell that to Jack Munro.

Miss Carney: Tell it to the steel unions.

Mr. Blaikie: I did not mean to be diverted like that by the heckling of the Hon. Minister. However, it gave me a chance to say a few things I have been wanting to say for a while, so I am not all that unhappy about it.

Mr. Thacker: You voted for the Charter.

Mr. Blaikie: The Hon. Member for Lethbridge—Foothills (Mr. Thacker) has a question?

Mr. Thacker: You voted for the Charter and that is what made us more like the—

Mr. Blaikie: The Hon. Member says the Charter has contributed to the Americanization of politics? It definitely has that potential. Even though in the final analysis I voted for the Charter, and one reason I did was that it had a notwithstanding clause. If he checks what I had to say in my first and last speech on the Constitution he will see that the points I am making today I made then. Check the record. I expressed an anxiety at that time about what the Charter could mean—

Mr. Towers: Why did you vote for it, then?

Mr. Blaikie: —with respect to preserving our parliamentary traditions. One of the reasons I was able to vote for it at the time was that it included a notwithstanding clause. That is not the view taken by some of my colleagues. Some people thought the notwithstanding clause was a serious degradation of the Charter. That is not the view I took.

Getting back to the Americanization of Canadian politics—

Miss Carney: Unbelievable.

Mr. Blaikie: —by the Progressive Conservative Party, what I wanted to say before I was so happily distracted by the Minister, is that the Conservative Party has adopted the American view of politics that to the victor goes the spoils, and done so with a passion. That is not to say there was not political patronage before the Conservative Party came along.

Mr. Merrithew: Hardly.

Miss Carney: Think of the NDP Government in B.C.

Mr. Blaikie: God knows we have had political patronage before. However, the Conservatives have made a virtue of what some might argue has at least been regarded as a kind of necessary evil in the political system.

Miss Carney: Be careful.

Mr. Blaikie: Canadians should have been listening a little more carefully to the Prime Minister. Had they listened to what he said before he was elected as Prime Minister they would have heard him say that he was going to reward Conservatives. Their 20 years in the wilderness was going to be overcome by all kinds of rewards and awards and contracts and what not. He would not appoint anyone else until there were no Conservatives left to appoint. These things the Prime Minister said should have been signals to the Canadian public. Perhaps they were. I do not think there was ever a great deal of trust but people were so rightly desperate to get rid of the Liberals that they blinded themselves to the kinds of signals the Prime Minister was sending out about what kind of Prime Minister he would be and what kind of Government we would get.

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But this Government has taken that American philosophy of “to the victor goes the spoils” one more step. The Tories said the spoils not only belong to the political Party that happens to get elected but they belong to the personal network of the Prime Minister. That is why Canadians rightly feel, even though we all know that patronage is nothing new, that something new is happening, that some ill-defined line—and I agree it is ill-defined—has been stepped over by the Government. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that there was this urgency in the committee and elsewhere in the House of Commons to try to do something about questions of political morality. Maybe that is why there was the possibility of unanimity within the committee that looked at the question of registration of lobbyists. I do not know, but I do think that it is widely felt both in this House by those who can admit it and by those who cannot that something new, and I would suggest terrible, is happening to our political system when day after day we have to deal with the kinds of things that we have been dealing with for so long now.

I am not concerned personally in the sense that when one enters political life one has to assume that all the traditional cynicism about politics and politicians will be directed at a person as an individual. That is something we all choose to live with when we choose to run. What I am concerned about is that the whole political agenda in Canada is being dragged down. There are things that need to be debated and which need to be paid attention to, things which are very important and which simply cannot get as high on the political agenda as they need to be as long as we are pre-occupied with questions