

Government Orders

who care, human beings with talent, human beings who try, then the institution of democracy would benefit.

But we cannot ask the referee to referee unless we say: "In your refereeing we are asking you to enforce the rules not today, not tomorrow, but every day and every tomorrow and in every circumstance". If it is a bad rule collectively we will change the rule. If the enforcement is in the escalation of violence, such as in Croatia and Serbia, then the institution loses all of its credibility. This Chamber has seen a massive escalation of violence, verbal violence. There is no greater transgression on the collective privileges of this Chamber than the notion of contempt. The most contemptuous group of people in this country about this institution are journalists. They are incorrect on so many occasions.

• (1310)

We do not have the courage collectively to haul them before the bar and say: "Stop being contemptuous". It is hard to convince them of this. We cannot allow contempt for this institution to occur in this Chamber, and particularly by leaders in this Chamber, and not call it to account. The contempt for this institution and for the people in it has to stop here first. Then we have an opportunity, by our example, to call others to be accountable for the terrible things they say about the people in this institution and about the institution itself which have no basis in fact and reality.

The lead comes from allowing those comments to be made most often in this Chamber before they pass outside. That is something that we can stop collectively if we have the will to stop it.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments by the chief government Whip. I want to suggest that perhaps he has actually violated a few rules himself in his remarks, particularly in terms of impugning the motives of some of my colleagues.

I want to ask him a question dealing with an amendment made by my House leader and seconded by myself.

It is directly in terms of his responsibilities as the Whip of the Conservative caucus. In part the amendment says:

"The party leaders, House leaders and Whips be responsible for the comportment of their caucuses;"

I understand that the government House leader has rejected that. I want to know whether the government Whip feels that Whips should not have the responsibility for the decorum of their members while in the House; that the House leader should not have responsibility for the decorum; that the party leaders, whether it is the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition or the Leader of the third party, should not have responsibility for the decorum of their members.

My leader has made it very clear that if any of my caucus use racist or sexist remarks in this House she will be the one to punish them. As we know, there is nothing in the rules that clearly defines that sexist remarks or racist remarks are against the rules of this House. They should be, but they are not.

The member went on about how we need a referee. Where the rules are not clear, and there is an opportunity for House leaders, Whips and party leaders to enforce discipline, is it not our responsibility to do that? Would the member therefore comment on that particular amendment put forward by my colleague?

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the question was raised. I have risen before. I have had complaints about my behaviour raised in this Chamber by members of my own caucus. I responded and do respond in terms of responsibility. I am an officer of the House as the Whip of a party and I have a responsibility to uphold the authority of the Chair. I have absolutely no difficulty with that, absolutely none. I can be quite firm on that.

If one of my members gets punched in the teeth they have a responsibility to defend themselves. If the Chair will intervene, great. If the Chair does not intervene then we have the beginning of a war. Today in Question Period the member for Hamilton East used the word "ignorant" in dealing with a member of the cabinet. We could have had intervention by the referee who would say: "That is an elbow. Stop it". If one lets it go then one is going to get something in response.