

Government Orders

Substantial portions of that bill will allow them to see openly and transparently how this House and how this government reach the decisions that will affect how much they contribute to their society, how it is used and how that will affect much of the pattern of their lives as Canadians. What it will allow us to do individually is to have a more of an input in that process and also to get more out of it.

I do not come here only to represent my constituents. I do not come here thinking that the views of Ottawa West should determine what should happen to the country. I come here to be part of building a nation on their behalf, certainly to represent their interests. The development of this wonderful nation called Canada is in their interest as well. I listen to the people from all parts of this country, from different kinds of communities. Together, certainly in my caucus, we try to come up with what we think is best for the country and best for its people.

I hope that with these more open processes of members of Parliament being able to work together in committees to develop legislation, to consult openly with Canadians, Canadians will feel and will truly have a more active voice in that decision making if they choose to exercise that. They will also have members of Parliament able to engage more actively and dynamically in the exchange of views that allows to build consensus, not only about the specific problems and actions that we are confronted with but about a longer term vision for the country.

We will always have differences of opinions on what those directions are. At least I hope with the measures we are taking today when we complete our work here in Parliament, a new program, that it will better serve the interests of our individual constituents and the country because we have looked at all aspects of it, we have considered all points of view and we have done that wonderful thing of not letting one point of view prevail over all others, but of finding that accommodation of many different points of view.

I want to touch on one thing. As some of the members in this House know, my role in the last Parliament was as critic on public service issues. I want to say one thing that I think is going to become increasingly important. That is going to be developing not only a House and committees but a government in the broadest sense of including the public service that is also more consultative, more open and more capable of balancing those many different interests in society, making good decisions and recommending to us as government and as parliamentarians good decisions.

I know, having seen the transformation over a period of years in municipal government to a more participative democracy, to quote a famous Canadian, that it takes time for the public service to see the wisdom of the people as a useful input to decision

making. I know it is going to be difficult for them. I know it is going to be a challenge.

• (1755)

I encourage them to go along with Parliament on this trip to a more democratic society and to see it as a positive step forward for how the public service functions as well.

I have only a few minutes left but I do want to touch on a few things. I want to touch on the issue of free votes. This is the beginning of a debate that will come back to us.

It is very easy for me to know what the constituents who phone or write to me on a subject or respond to a questionnaire think. Do I really know what my constituents think when I know the poorest members of society have less access to being able to respond and participate in a public debate?

Do I have a responsibility to know that even though some people in my constituency are relatively voiceless without the money to organize, their views are, nonetheless, important and how they are affected is important? Yes, I do.

Do I have the audacity to say that on any given vote in this House I know what my constituents think? I do not think so. I know what a small sample of my constituents think.

I also have to know in much broader terms who my constituents are. I need to be in touch with them in a variety of ways and to absorb into myself what the many different concerns and preoccupations they have are so that I can bring all of those to bear as well as what I hear from fellow parliamentarians when I make a decision.

Do I believe in recall? Let me say that I have been married for 31 years. I am sure there have been hundreds if not thousands of days in those 31 years when my husband thought his life would be better off without this woman in it. On those days, he would have chosen to divorce me.

However, on balance of those more than 10,000 days, both of us would say that there has been more good than bad and a lot of in between. We are glad that we did not have the easy escape hatch, that we are prepared to live with the balance of the good and bad. There is a lot of that in democracy.

On any given day I may displease my constituents. My government may displease my constituents. On balance, I hope they will weigh both the positive and the less positive and not look at only their momentary self-interest when they decide whether I and my government have done a good job or not.

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey): Mr. Speaker, to the member for Ottawa West, the leader of the Reform Party said that there was almost a form of recall when he said that Burke never got re-elected.