

Government Orders

some basic respect for democracy, some respect for Parliament and ultimately, respect for the will of the people of Canada. It should withdraw this bill immediately.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I guess I am happy to participate in the debate. I am sorry the debate is here. I just want to share the views in perhaps a more restrained way than my hon. friend from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte. I agree with almost everything he said.

I have sat here through this debate and I should be somewhere else, as most members should. It is a beautiful night outside here at the House of Commons in Ottawa. Summer has hit finally and most of us should be somewhere else.

I think the intervention of the hon. member for Miramichi, who is a member of longstanding, who pinpointed and really cuffed the ears of the government Whip, illustrates the reason why I wanted to participate in the debate on this motion. I argued before the Speaker made his ruling that this is one of the more fundamental rulings that, as far as I am concerned, has ever been made by the Chair, which is going over a period of time. The precedent that this sets will affect in a most adverse way the whole reason why we are here.

Number one, I will come down to the procedural point because, quite frankly, I want to take on the Chair. I just want to mention that I could not believe—I am just horrified—that the Chair made the ruling it made. It is the grossest interpretation of the rules that we have ever had. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Chair forgot something.

We had a Prime Minister some years ago who wanted to do certain things in terms of our Constitution. He wanted to patriate it. Thank God he did. With all the criticism that he gets for having patriated the Constitution and the revision of history that in effect Quebec was left out—and of course, with a separatist government it was never going to sign anything—he at least brought our Constitution document back here. This gave us the opportunity to have something called Meech Lake.

Having said all that at one time, the Prime Minister, with the persuasion of premiers and/or public opinion decided to go to the Supreme Court to see if the Constitution Act 1982 was valid. The Supreme Court of Canada said, among other things in a most interesting decision, a little vague in some definition: “Oh, yes, Mr. Prime Minister of the Government of Canada, you can do what you are going to do but there is something called a convention. The convention says you should get some approval of the provinces”.

Without going into that too far, this fundamental issue we are debating tonight, and I agree with my hon. friend from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, is not the five or six bills that are there to be reinstated. We all know there is to be reinstatement. I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre who, in effect, asked if there was a government minister in the House.

I know I am sort of moving around and have not zoned into what I want to say. But that intervention by the member for Winnipeg North Centre asking that simple but fundamental question about the whole parliamentary process: “Is there a minister of the Crown here?” and finding out there was none, illustrates the problem we are debating here in the House of Commons with this notice of motion.

I cannot believe it, knowing a lot of my good friends on the opposite side, that they have amnesia in terms of parliamentary tradition. I know tradition can suffocate us all, but it is not tradition for tradition's sake. It is tradition for the sake of the people. As has been said here before in the debate, the whole reason we exist is not to come here and make crazy speeches or stand up on points of order. It is to try to represent the people to see if the public purse is being spent in the way it should be spent, according to the mandate the public has given to the government and/or the bills given to the government.

The very fact that there is no minister of the Crown here responsible for the public purse is a denial of the very reason why we exist. I was going to be rather restrained earlier tonight, but we had the government Whip, who may be able to whip all the eunuchs on the government side into submission, having the nerve to come up here and try and defend this fact under another