

Government Orders

old friends. They found there a particularly deceptive way of giving them satisfaction.

• (1230)

By introducing Bill C-22, the Liberal government gives even more strength to the Bloc Québécois' campaign slogan which roughly translates as: "Giving ourselves real power". Indeed, last October 25, Quebecers gave themselves real power in Ottawa. Not the power to favour friends of the government, not the power to grant lucrative contracts to companies that gave money to the party or are able to hire the services of large lobbyists firms. No, Mr. Speaker, real power! The power to defend the interests of real people, the interests of all those who are indignant about questionable initiatives such as Bill C-22.

It is no wonder that some members opposite question the legitimacy of the Bloc Québécois. It is difficult for them to accept the presence, in this House, of members whose party did not get any financial support from large corporations. It is not necessarily because of ideological or political differences that the financial establishment did not support the Bloc Québécois during the electoral campaign. In fact, several companies have clearly expressed their support to the Bloc and wanted to give it funds. Our party simply refused to play the games of the lobbyists. Our legitimacy rests on people, not on corporations.

As you know, when a company or an association asks to meet a member of the Official Opposition, that member does not have to follow the same ritual than a Liberal member. It is not necessary to look on the electoral list to decide upon the length of the interview or the interest that must be given to it. The only criterion which is used to determine the political agenda of a member from the Bloc Québécois is the defence of the interests of the people from Quebec. Do the Liberal members really think that people are stupid enough as to believe that a person who contributed five dollars to the Liberal Party fund is going to get the same attention as a multinational which contributed \$100,000?

I would like to clarify one thing just to make sure I am not going to be misunderstood here. I am not saying that the ministers and government members who received contributions from companies are all corrupt and ill-intentioned. Not at all! I rather look at those poor Liberal or Conservative members as victims. They are the victims of a legislative tradition that allowed the institutionalization of a patronage system in which only the rich can be heard. The only way to restore the system would be to eliminate the donations companies make to political parties by amending the legislation.

The old parties reject such a measure. According to them, there is no need to amend the federal legislation on political financing which is so beneficial to them. If people want to be

heard, they can turn to a lobbyist firm. This mentality is so deeply entrenched in Canadian political habits that the government members feel they have to do things as usual in order to be true to tradition. I can understand that, but I do not understand why they refuse to amend the rules that force them to figure out all kinds of schemes to please their generous donors.

• (1235)

As our dauntless Prime Minister often says, it is a question of dignity. I would even say it is a question of public morality. Not an obtuse and puritan kind of morality, but one that is based on honour and respect for the most fundamental principles of a democracy such as ours.

By giving compensation to those who tried to swindle the country, Bill C-22 confirms the opinion of some who are increasingly convinced that the House of Commons is there to defend the interests of the rich like Power Corporation and Seagram's and not those of the ordinary people.

If the original sale of Pearson International Airport was a flagrant mistake on the part of the Tory government, the compensations provided for in Bill C-22 are nothing short of criminal. As the member for York South—Weston rightly said in this House, it is a sting of the worst kind. I say to the government it should be careful because, as dangerous as it might be, a scorpion can always be crushed. As we have seen on last October 25, Quebec's population knows very well where to stomp.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères): Mr. Speaker, you will remember that in the last election campaign, the Liberal Party and its leader kept on saying that if elected, they intended to lead this country with honesty, integrity and openness and that they wanted to consult the people and Parliament, either in this House or in various committees.

However, I think that we can question this government's real desire to really consult and to be open. Yes, we have had some debates in this House that are rather unique in Canadian history, debates on fundamental issues like the presence of Canadian UN troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Croatia, and on cruise missile testing on Canadian territory.

But often we feel that we are involved in these debates in a very symbolic way, since we sense that the debates are being used to legitimize decisions that have already been made by the government. One reason that I think we can question the government's real desire to listen to what is going on in this House is Bill C-22. For two weeks, my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and in the Reform Party have spoken in this House to explain why we think this bill is unfair and unacceptable, but the government seems to pay no attention to what we say in this House.