

The Address

for me from Calgary to vote for support for fishermen, for example, since I have none in my constituency.

Political parties have a vested interest in building a consensus across the country, in fact we are one of the few institutions that do have that. I want to ask the committee to examine this matter to make sure that we do not throw out the baby with the bath water, so to speak, in saying everybody is free to vote and should vote according to their constituents wishes.

I want to ask the committee to re-examine this question of opposition day and opposition day motions, which is what the hon. member referred to. These votes on opposition day motions are supposed to be a surrogate for votes on the question of supply and therefore are confidence by definition. They do because of the motion we have raised, "this House loves medicare", and you have the government voting against it which is an absurdity. We do not want to vote against it, but if it is a surrogate for confidence we have no choice.

Let us re-examine that. Maybe we need to re-examine what those votes should be and I would like the committee to take a look at that. I think we have to examine Question Period quite frankly, because if all members are going to be equal, then all members should be equal. He knows, as I know, in watching the British House that it has quite a different approach. The approach is that everybody is equal, the government comes in and everybody has an equal opportunity to question government or make representations on behalf of their constituents, everybody.

We are organized in party blocs where the main opposition bloc first and the second opposition bloc next are structured in a way which means the individual is less important than the party bloc. If individuals are to count in this House, and the public is demanding that, we have got to look at that. Maybe that needs to be changed as well and I ask the committee to take a look at that.

I think that the empowerment of individual members is essential to give meaning to the casting of a ballot and to the selecting of an individual. We also have recognized though that we are a large diverse country and we cannot afford to dilute the glue that political parties bring to this country by giving a Conservative in British Columbia a

vested interest in trying to reach an accommodation with a Conservative in Quebec and a Conservative in Newfoundland, and the same applies for the other national parties.

If we unduly destroy the cohesion of national parties, then we have to ask ourselves what is to take their place in keeping this country together? If everybody represents a small parochial interest, then we lose some very important glue. I want to ask the committee to look into that as well.

I want to ask the committee to study these and to report back as soon as possible. I would like to start these changes next September. I do not think we can get them done before the end of June, but I would like them looked at and we do not need to proceed in one large package; we can proceed piecemeal, implementing as we go along.

I know we are all pretty cynical about each other's motives, but I must say at this time when the future of the country is at stake and the reputation of parliamentarians, all of us, is at such a low ebb, that we have to treat this responsibility seriously and we have to look at those changes. I think it can be done. I hope that the committee will take on that responsibility very early and will do something for this Chamber and for this country.

[Translation]

Mr. François Gérin (Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead): Mr. Speaker, I can hardly hear the minister's speech and find any credibility in it. In the Throne Speech, the very paragraph about a reform of the Standing Orders of the House also mentions that the report of the Royal Commission, appointed to study the electoral reform, will be tabled.

May I remind you that the Royal Commission was also established to study political party financing. However, we all know that, in spite of the promise made by the Prime Minister a few days before the last election, to institute public financing as soon as he was elected,—two years and a half have elapsed and nothing has come of it—we know that he never intended to do so and thus he has deceived all Canadians, including Quebecers. Moreover, in establishing that Royal Commission and in appointing the members he has chosen himself, he led