

The hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants who just spoke so eloquently knows full well that there are more reforms needed than just those that are in this package. One of the problems we have—and I would like the hon. member to comment on it—is that a lot of people watch us on television and the camera does not lie. They see us all going around blindly like sheep with rings through our noses.

• (1600)

If you remember, the government side comes in and says Tuesday is Thursday, and you are supposed to go with the party line. You will remember that on the opposition side, if they say that Tuesday is Tuesday, we will probably get up and say no, it is really Thursday.

One of the problems we have is not just reform of the rules of this place, but a true reform of the political system and how we allow our members to contribute in a positive way so that we can have better legislation for this country.

We work under a system of party discipline. It is not there to make this place work better but to preserve the leadership of the party. Perhaps the time has come to allow Canadians to tell members of Parliament about how we can be more relevant.

I would like the hon. member to comment on whether or not he believes there is a further need for reform of the caucus system and the party system so that members can get up—and I know he has done it many times and maybe that is why he is sitting as an independent Conservative—and speak and contribute in debate in a way that does not threaten the demise of the government if you are a government member, and does not threaten the authority of the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of the New Democratic Party or the members of those parties. Does he believe there is a further need for reform in a real way that would allow members to get up and contribute during debate in a spirit of co-operation. Also, it is a combative place here.

I would like him to comment on that because I think all the rule changes we are talking about here are wonderful. It is great that people have different ideas. I do not like most of the rule changes I see but I like some of them.

I would like the hon. member to comment on whether or not he would like to see further reforms so that, as individual members, we are more relevant in this place and we are more responsive and reflect the needs of our constituents.

Government Orders

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of my hon. friend from Dartmouth. My riding goes right up and actually goes right by the airport. We actually meet, believe it or not in one corner.

Obviously, this is about more than just reform of the rules. The question posed could have a very long answer, so I will try to be brief on this point. I guess I am a living example of the thrust of the question about reform. I have often felt like this and that is why I liked the McGrath report. In part, at least, it did come out with having less confidence votes. I mean, this business of having supply days, and it happened when we were in government and when we were in opposition, so nothing new has happened over on the government side. This is part of the frustration of the public. They have been disappointed because they thought that perhaps a new government was going to change its ways. When we were in the opposition we would say: "Please, government, do not make this a confidence vote." We put it right in our motions, the same as the NDP and sometimes the Liberals put it in the present opposition motions, "not a confidence vote". And yet, the government each time, to make sure members toe the party line, have made it a confidence vote and vote the party line.

I really believe that other than speeches from the throne, budget speeches and perhaps tax bills, every other subject matter bill should be a free line vote and not a confidence vote.

I am quite happy to sit here as an independent, and I do not have to toe the party line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Another questioner. Another question and comment from the hon. member for Vancouver North.

Mr. Nowlan: I just want to conclude.

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I admire the member from Annapolis Valley—Hants very much. The only thing is, every once in awhile he is full of it. When he talks about committees not being telecast, he does not know what he is saying. In every legislature where it has been done, it has improved the committee system, not destroyed it. It means, sir, that when a member walks into a committee and does not know what he is talking about, if that committee is being telecast, the world knows it.

The hon. member is also overlooking one other factor. People have a right to know, and not telecasting committees means denying the people the right to know.