

pretended and applied by the most unreasonable of agents, and I cannot accept that the rather suspect rationality of this government should have precedence over the rule of law and the law of the land.

● (2207)

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a very pertinent question at this point, and I wonder if the hon. member—

Miss MacDonald: I will take the question when I have finished my speech, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this country have lived all their lives trusting in the basic tenets of their democracy. They have waved few banners about their rights, and I suppose if pressed to enumerate them they would probably have trouble doing so. They simply take them for granted, and assume that their elected representatives do so as well. Well, it is obvious that such complacency about our civil rights is no longer justified.

The citizens of this country can no longer assume that their government will protect their basic freedoms. That trust which they placed in their leaders is no longer respected. The government has been misusing the trust of the nation. It has been manipulating that trust to condition Canadians to accept, on the one hand, the fact that a certain amount of law breaking by those in power is essential and, on the other hand, that such law breaking will never touch them or their rights. The most dangerous aspect of this whole issue is the notion that these infringements of basic freedoms can touch some of us and not touch all of us.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the revelations of wrongdoing which have emerged recently affect every single Canadian; that the freedoms of every single Canadian are threatened by the attitude of this government; and that the trust and complacency about our freedoms are no longer justified.

It is time for every Canadian to re-think the basic civil rights which he or she has taken for granted for so long, to recognize the fragile nature of those rights and to demand that the government respect them. We must all realize that by allowing the negation of civil rights in some "special" cases we have created an apparatus which can eventually infringe upon all of us, and we need to be aware of the progression of that infringement.

In the past we have been faced with the temporary suppression of our freedoms during times of war, through the War Measures Act. Many injustices were carried out under the umbrella of that act which were excused because the "national security" was threatened by war. More recently, during peacetime, the government invoked the War Measures Act during the October crisis of 1970. Again injustices were carried out against innocent people, and the government excused it all because the "national security" was threatened, not by war, but by subversion, terrorism or by an apprehended insurrection.

Now we discover that the freedoms of some individuals and groups are being eroded every day in peacetime, without even

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the pretense of a War Measures Act, and that it is all taking place because the "national security" is being threatened, not by war, subversion or terrorism, but by the democratically expressed dissent of some groups or even by the suspected beliefs of some others.

I suggest that both the concept of national security and what constitutes a threat to it have undergone a considerable revision in recent years, a revision not conducive to civil liberties, and I am terrified to think how much further that progression might go. These fears are not exaggerated when we are faced with a government which confuses the national good with its own good.

● (2212)

It is the responsibility of all Canadians to uphold their civil rights in every area of their lives. But it is the special responsibility of the members of parliament to uphold the system of law and of parliamentary democracy. That applies particularly to cabinet ministers. Those who have governed us in the past have always taken that responsibility seriously and, by so doing, have encouraged the belief of all citizens in their political system. But the cynical attitude of this government toward parliamentary traditions has thwarted the expectations of Canadians and encouraged a cynical attitude in the public perception of values. If the people of this country can no longer look to their government for confirmation of their basic freedoms, then where can they turn? If the government cannot be counted upon to uphold the law, who can?

What the events of these past few weeks have pointed up is that we must all reflect on what the rule of law means. It is a fundamental tenet of our democracy and we must not take it for granted, lest it slip away from us. As expressed by the British jurist, Dicey, in "The Law of the Constitution", the rule of law means not only that with us no man is above the law, but that here every man, whatever be his rank or condition, is subject to the ordinary law of the realm and amenable to the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals.

That ordinary citizens do not rise above the law is assured by the efforts of the police and the security forces. That the police and security forces do not rise above the law can only be assured by the efforts of the ministers who are supposed to be responsible to this House.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. It being 10:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the debate and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the proceedings now before the House, in accordance with Standing Order 58(9).

The question is on the motion by Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain) and the amendment thereof by Mr. Broadbent. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said amendment?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.