

The principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law, have always been kept steadily in view by the Canadian Parliament; these are: To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence of tyranny of a majority;

In other words, the rules of the House are there to make sure that even a small minority in Parliament will have the right and the opportunity to raise questions with respect to legislation, with respect to the business of the country. If the Government can suspend those rules by using a large majority, and does that every time the rules do not suit it, then we are in for serious trouble. This could lead to a very dangerous precedent. The next thing we know the Government because it does not like three readings on a Bill, may decide that we will have only one reading on a Bill; or because the Government does not like an extended debate, we will have a short debate.

That is the implication of this precedent when there is a Government with 210 Members and the biggest majority in Canadian history and it cannot live within the rules of Parliament that were unanimously agreed to after two long reports of parliamentary committees.

What it is saying is that Jim McGrath and his committee were wrong. What it is saying is that Tom Lefebvre and his committee were wrong. It has had conflicts within its own caucus, it could not agree what to do with respect to abortion. The Supreme Court ruled on abortion in February, yet it took the Government until the middle of May to come forward with a motion—not a piece of legislation but a multiple choice motion, not a solution to the problem.

The reason we have delays is that the government Party cannot manage the business. It cannot decide within its own caucus what it should put before Parliament. We are now left to the last moment when it wants to rush all this legislation through against the interests of the country.

I submit that one of the reasons that we have debate in this Parliament is not simply to decide the vote in this Parliament. We know who will win the vote in this Parliament. The Government with its large majority will do that. One of the principles of the House is that by debating in this House we influence public opinion outside the House and the media outside the House. That can only be done sometimes by extended debate.

If we look at the Government's attempt to deindex old age pensions, we see that if that had come to a vote immediately after the Government proposed it, it would have gone ahead and done it. It would have deindexed old age pensions. But by extended debate in the House we were able to bring to the attention of the Canadian population what the Government was doing. That takes some time. The media picked it up and private interest groups picked it up. Finally, the Government backed down because the Canadian population was able to tell it that it was wrong.

Mr. Lewis: Warren wants 10 weeks' holiday.

Mr. Allmand: I am ready to sit here all summer if it is to get important things done for the Canadian people, but I am not

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willing to sit here to bail out a negligent and improvident Government.

I remind you once again, Mr. Speaker, and I will conclude on this point, that Standing Order 1 states:

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other Order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker or Chairman, whose decisions shall be based on the usages, forms, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and on parliamentary tradition in Canada and other jurisdictions—

I submit the jurisdiction in the U.K. and other Commonwealth countries. It is your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to reject this tyrannical motion to suppress the rights of Parliament.

• (1100)

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his comments and I will, of course, give them very careful consideration.

It being eleven o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 19(4), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 21.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

HATE LITERATURE—ALBERTA COURT OF APPEAL DECISION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, James Keegstra's 1985 conviction under our hate literature law was overturned this week by the Alberta Court of Appeal. The court said that this law was inconsistent with the freedom of expression assured by our Charter of Rights.

Let us remember, therefore, that this decision was founded on the court's interpretation of this law as written, it was not a vindication of Mr. Keegstra's views.

Seventeen years after the hate literature section of the Criminal Code was passed we are revisiting a basic tenet of our democratic nationhood—standing steadfast in our support for freedom of speech, while preventing wrongful public attack of identifiable groups.

Where do we go from here?

The Justice Minister says the Government is now reviewing the hate literature law, but we also need a commitment from Government that it will ask the Supreme Court to examine this very important issue, should the Alberta Attorney General not do so. This is the kind of commitment we need today.

In moving forward, we must search for a solution that strikes a careful balance between protecting all members of our multicultural society from unjust attack, while remaining true to the freedom of expression guaranteed in our Charter of Rights.