

*Government Orders*

The whole issue of elected officials being more accountable to the people they represent has increasingly become a pressing and troubling issue for Canadians and they are demanding action.

Who could forget the now famous quote from the former leader of the Liberal Party during the election campaign. When accused of handing out patronage appointments to senior Liberal supporters he declared on national TV, "I had no choice". Who will forget the legacy of the man who accused Mr. Turner?

The last 10 years have seen more scandal, more patronage, more impropriety by elected public officials and more PR campaigns to cover up the scandals than I believe Canadian society has ever experienced. It all climaxed during the last election. Politically conscious Canadians once and for all proved that they had had enough, throwing out 75 per cent of the incumbents.

The issue behind today's debate is not simply private interests cajoling public officials. The issue transcends the question of how to control and make more transparent the access these private interests have with public officials. The issue was articulated by the Prime Minister during his speech in this House. The Prime Minister talked about trust. In this vein the Prime Minister said that in a democracy, elected officials must be accountable to the interests of all Canadians, not just the privileged few.

Such words are music to my ears. If the Prime Minister was fully aware of what he was saying, and I think he was, and if he fully intends to put into practice this populist ideology, then I am half way to returning home to my family and my medical practice.

However, as Canadians saw with the previous government, actions speak louder than words. It is one thing for politicians to accuse others of improprieties and to preach about patronage, conflict of interest and ethics. Canadians demand action, not PR.

The actions of the government, of the Prime Minister are to appoint, and I underline the word appoint, an ethics counsellor. Oh, they tell us we will review and study the legislation. This actually is Tory legislation from the previous government dealing with registering lobbyists.

• (1245)

Note that although the Prime Minister says the interests of all must be considered, only the Prime Minister and not the duly elected representatives of the people through Parliament will decide who is the ethics watchdog. Only to the Prime Minister,

not the duly elected representatives of the people through Parliament, will the ethics counsellor be accountable.

Given all of the public attention and the humble, trust us kind of speeches made by the government on public trust and accountability, together with the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday on appointing an ethics counsellor, I must say I am little saddened.

Canadians demand action on this issue. Can hon. members not sense and understand that? Canadians are sick and tired of slick rhetoric and public relations. They see right through it and no wonder. They certainly have had enough experience with that type of activity over the last 15 years. Action is what they want. Action.

Canadians are no longer willing to stand idly by as outsiders while politicians line their own pockets and promote their own interests or those of their friends and relatives. If we as elected officials really and truly want to clean up this place, if we really and truly want to dispose of shady, sleazy politics which cast shadows not only over this fine city, but the quality and degree of democracy in this entire country, all of us can do it.

The vast majority of members know on any given day for any given subject what the consensus majority of their constituents believe and want. As a non-professional politician I would say that is one of our most important jobs. The other even more important job as publicly elected representatives is to represent our constituents' views.

This indeed is how I interpreted the Prime Minister's remarks. I will repeat what he said: "We must take into account the interests of all Canadians, not just the privileged few". Yet the Prime Minister is against allowing MPs in the Liberal Party to vote freely according to their constituents' views. The Prime Minister is against the idea of allowing constituents to recall their representatives if they do wrong. Are such policies not contradictory to the humble power to the people statements he made yesterday and which are printed in the Liberal red book?

I leave the answers to these questions to the existing seat holders in this Parliament. We who occupy these privileged places must eventually reconcile our consciences. As long as we represent to the very best of our abilities on each and every issue the consensus views of those individuals who are paying for us to be here, the many thousands of people in our constituencies and our parliamentary *raison d'être*, we should have no difficulties whatsoever at the end of the day saying to our constituents, our families, our children and our grandchildren that we did the best we could.

Should anything we do in whatever way cause us to contradict the consensus views of our constituents, then we must ask ourselves: Who are we doing this for? Is it for ourselves to promote our narrow self-interests? Is it for our friends or relatives to promote their narrow self-interests? Perhaps we could justify our representation in the interests of Canada, maybe Alberta, or maybe Quebec. Perhaps we could justify voting a particular way on certain issues simply in the interests