

Government Orders

If we take away that ability to expose, to examine, to debate, to propose amendments, to make changes, to seek to improve, to stop dead in its tracks what is worthy of being stopped dead in its tracks, we do not have a Parliament any more. We have a lovely gilded Chamber, rich and ornate, reflecting the history and evolution of the country, but absolutely neutered in its responsibility to reflect and echo the voice of the peoples of Canada in every region of this country.

That is what has happened today. This is serious business. As this governing party sinks deeper and deeper in the polls, it becomes increasingly removed from the people of Canada and from the values and views of the people of Canada, increasingly withdraws into Fortress Ottawa, increasingly withdraws into its offices and the sheltered existence of a member of Parliament, a particular one who cannot go home any more.

As this party finds itself reduced to that state, it increasingly takes away from Parliament and from the people the responsibilities of members to be heard. It shuts this place down.

What are we reduced to? We are reduced to the Speaker sitting in his chair presiding over a debate, quietly, pleasantly nodding his head, hoping for order. We are reduced to members like myself and others in the opposition, the independent member from Nova Scotia, feeling a burning sense of outrage, and raising our voices in anger, hoping that our anger will reverberate, resonate, and echo across this land because only the people can put a stop to this tyranny.

We are reduced to government members not even caring in the face of this unprecedented action, not even caring about the destruction of the institution, hidden away in their offices, wondering whether they have any future after this Parliament.

Where are the media? Well, if it cannot be said in four sentences, if it cannot be reduced to an eight-second television clip, if it cannot be reported as a sensational front-page headline, if the story cannot be told in the space given to a columnist, newspaper journalist, or a television reporter then it is a story not worth telling. The story that is unfolding in this Parliament today does not make an easy headline. It cannot be described in an eight-second clip. It is the story of the destruction of a tradition that is 800 years old, the British parliamentary tradition.

It is the end of the bloodless revolution. It is a bloodless counter-revolution bred by indifference when

the institution is dismantled, regrettably with the acquiescence of the Chair. I hope that members are paying attention to this debate, particularly members who are here for the first term. I have only been here a short while, a little more than a decade. It does not take long to begin to understand that the statues out on the grounds of Parliament Hill, of McGee and Diefenbaker, Pearson, St. Laurent and Laurier, leaders of this country, are more than just bronze relics collecting dust. They are part of the institutional memory of this place. They stand and give testimony to the struggle to build a country. The one behind the Library of Parliament, of McGee, who died at 43, is a testimony to the struggle for Confederation itself, to the contract entered into by many peoples, to the institution in which the voice of a country could be heard.

Those kinds of parliamentarians would be absolutely outraged, would feel a sense of betrayal. They would suggest, I am sure, that what is being done today by the government in the name of efficiency, in the name of making it easier, in the name of ducking one's responsibilities, is a betrayal of the parliamentary evolution in this country.

I hope Canadians will understand that the debate today is not a procedural argument. The debate today is not about whether the government should have an easy time reintroducing four or five bills. The debate today is not about whether or not the government should have an easy time reintroducing four or five bills. The debate today is not about whether or not the opposition has been denied some ability to tackle in greater measure four or five pieces of legislation. The debate today is about whether or not a government half way through its term, a government at record low levels in the polls, a government showing record disdain for the views of the people and the Parliament of this country will be allowed in the interest of its own partisan convenience to destroy hundreds of years of parliamentary tradition.

• (1830)

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you the people of Canada, when they become aware of what is happening here today and when they become aware that their institution is being destroyed, will not stand for it. I say to you that unless this Prime Minister is absolutely convinced that his record is beyond redemption and therefore it makes no difference, unless this Prime Minister and this party want to wear the label of tyrants—dictatorial tyrants—in the history of this country, then the government should recant, come to its senses, withdraw this bill and show