

*Government Orders*

northern ridings of the provinces or even some parts of the central provinces on the prairies.

It is appropriate for us to look at the whole matter of how we represent our constituents, our availability to them and the opportunity to be real representatives by the fact that we are among our people on a regular basis and can schedule meetings to hear their views.

What I also wish to address is that while there are some who lament the new rule changes that are being proposed, I am one who believes that this institution must focus more sharply on the rules that are already in place. We who have been here for a long time—and I have now been here for some 17 years—lament that there is a decay of Parliament. It came most predominantly when television came to this institution.

What has happened is, I think, an utter disgrace to the nation of Canada. Every member of Parliament should pause, reflect and to ask the question: Who is being served by how we behave here? I do not think it matters much if one member calls another a slanderous name or imputes a motive or suggests that they lie with respect to any of us as individuals. Obviously, it is a discourtesy, but to the extent that it weakens the institution of Parliament it is a national tragedy.

We must take a look at the rules of this place and examine the conduct of all members of the House, particularly when it comes to Question Period. There is real reason for further examination, for asking ourselves to enforce the rules that we have above and beyond the simple examination of some new rule changes. The notion that a question cannot be argumentative, the notion that questions cannot be repeated, the notion that we are not allowed to impute motives one to another, or that a question cannot intend to slander another person, those are all part of Erskine May or Beauchesne. Yet we feed, in a daily diet, of verbal conduct that simply would not be accepted in any other form of civil meeting procedures in some other part of our society.

This Parliament is the mirror through which Canadians see themselves. How we conduct ourselves here is how Canadians ultimately end up feeling about Canada. I might be accused by members of the New Democratic Party of being somewhat pro-American when I give the

following example. I hope they will forgive me but it is not my intention. Many Canadian citizens leave Canada to take graduate degrees in the United States. They enter into cultural readjustment when they come home because they sense, after a period of time of working in the United States, that there is a negativism in this country which permeates through the society and leads people to the perspective and to the view that somehow we, in this nation, simply are a group who want to complain and complain about almost everything and anything. Whatever degree there is to that perspective of those who re-enter Canadian society after being away for a while elsewhere, it starts right here in this place. We have an adversarial system, separated by two sword lengths in which we develop as professionals in finding the negative.

• (1610)

I have been here 17 years, more than half of which I was on the opposition side of the House. When we watch the news and when we read the newspapers, we very seldom come away with a sense of what is good about our country. So seldom do we sense the pride and the joy of being Canadian. Very seldom do we accent the positive and certainly not on a continuous basis or in a full-fledged basis on a wide variety of issues. Instead, no matter what we all might be going right, there is a grovelling towards finding the negative. That is because the central institution, I believe, is one whose design is to find the negative. That is how Parliament was established, to find the negative.

While it may well be that there is some advantage to that—and I would be the first to concede that there is advantage in focusing in on those policies and acts of government that need to be improved. I also submit that the rules that have been developed over the years that we will find in Erskine May and in Beauchesne say that questions should not be argumentative, should not have preambles, should not impute motives. If we turn a deaf eye or ear to that, then what we are doing is ignoring the reason the rules were put there in the first place. Those rules are there because we must act with civility in this place. We must conduct ourselves in a manner that Canadians will feel pride in their country. We have to be able, through this institution, to reflect Canada in a way