

Supply

Some say that my proposals will not work because there will always be a majority of government members on those committees. I say that is wrong. Many committees have proven in the House that they can work. For example, there was the subcommittee on prison reform which was chaired by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan). There was the committee concerned with fiscal relationships between the provinces and the federal government chaired by the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau). There was the committee on regulatory reform chaired by the hon. member for Willowdale (Mr. Peterson). There was the committee on the National Trading Corporation, and the committee on the disabled which was chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith). Finally, there is the committee which is chaired by my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty), co-chaired by Senator Godfrey, the Standing Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments, dealing with the whole matter of regulatory reform and the place of regulations in any system.

These examples have proven that from time to time, when faced with the appropriate issue, party labels can drop and we can begin to probe for the truth as we see it.

Another example is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts which has worked magnificently under the member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) and the member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke). That committee has worked diligently and has made some progress toward the improvement of the control of Parliament over expenditures and the reporting of the government with respect to estimates.

So the capability does exist. It requires good will, it takes trust as well as some initiative. It is no longer acceptable to me as a parliamentarian that this government does not bring forward the proposals which it had promised in the Speech from the Throne. It is not only unacceptable to me but it is so to many other Canadians. It is equally unacceptable to Canadians that parliamentary debate be overlaid with frivolous and vexatious matters. That is not to say that debates should not be partisan—certainly they should be partisan—but they should not be meanly partisan and they should be directed to the issues affecting Canadians.

When I talk to my constituents, they ask me what Parliament can do about the various issues facing them. I have to tell them that it cannot do very much. Do you know why? Two hundred eighty two Members of Parliament cannot act on every issue in Parliament, but committees can act. However, they cannot take action immediately with respect to matters affecting Canadians unless the government says so. The government rarely agrees. That is the problem with our system, and I humbly and respectfully submit that this is what those reform proposals are there to remedy. I invite the government House leader to rise above some bitter experience and to review all the reports and documents which we have here—including those which he may be presenting before the government which so far have not seen the light of day—all

the public, private and inside information that there is, and at least put it before the committee so that we may deal with it.

When the government House leader was referring to my proposals, he was quoted in an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* as saying in the House that they were interesting, had some possibilities but were incomplete. I want to say to the government House leader that, incomplete as they are, I have never said that they were the last word in proposals. Rather, I have taken the view that they are the first words. There is the problem. They are the first word. There has been no other word, and if there are proposals from the government that will help to make this place work, then we are prepared to look at them. But we want to see them. I think that outside there is a silent but large constituency in Canada which wants to see this place work. It is tired of pettiness. It wants us to rise above ourselves and engender some of the things we do with trust and honest partisanship.

● (1740)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman, but his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The hon. member may continue if there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues. Let me finish now. There are some ministers in the House today. The Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts) is here. The Secretary of State for External Affairs is here. There is a parliamentary secretary here too, and some former ministers are here. If those gentlemen want to do a service to this House, they will speak to the government House leader and ask him to make this reference, because the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party have given an undertaking that such a reference, assuming it is broad enough—and I am sure it would be—will go to the committee very, very quickly without prolonged or long debate. I think the time has come when every one of us must be concerned about this place and must agree that we should begin to look at it anew.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this motion today as a strong partisan of parliamentary institutions. Like that of most members of the chamber, my understanding of and feeling for Parliament has grown, I think greatly, since I was first elected. I was elected in 1968, and during the last 14 years I have witnessed all the great debates, the ones in which our great parliamentary colleagues have given strong institutional leadership to our democratic traditions.