

The Address

not fully carried out but has probably not been very successful.

I think if the original idea had been carried out there would have been higher morale among the Swedish workers. It is very difficult to tell exactly from this distance.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour for me to participate in the throne speech debate and, as you pointed out, recognize that the name of my riding is both French and English. Probably not too many ridings in Canada have the distinction of having an English and French name in the title. I suppose there may be a few others but I am very proud to represent Portage—Interlake.

I listened to the distinguished member for Saint-Denis and the distinguished member for Toronto debating with an understanding which is usually lacking in this House of Commons, as well as with the respect that should be given and awarded to other members of Parliament regardless of their political stripe.

We talk about national unity, as the Prime Minister did in the throne speech. Part of the problem with this country is the lack of respect for members of Parliament, the lack of respect from one province to another and the lack of respect for our different cultures. That causes disunity within our country.

The goal we should foster is the reassessment and putting back into perspective the reasons we are so happy and successful as Canadians, and trying to find a way of keeping Canada together as opposed to finding ways which divide us.

We should look at the legislatures of the western world. We all have the opportunity on a very regular basis to look at the U.S. Congress and Senate in action, our neighbours across the line. If you would take a few minutes from time to time as I do, you would marvel at the way the elected bodies of our southern neighbours pay so much respect to the elected positions of each other. We just do not do that in this legislature.

I have sat for almost seven years in this House and watched the deterioration of debate to the point where character assassination seems to be the objective, whether it is from this side to members opposite, or from opposite to this side. That shows that we are not quite the sophisticated and cultured elite as we would like to

think. There is a major problem with our whole attitude and it reflects on the way we conduct ourselves in this Chamber.

I have also had the opportunity, as have some others, to sit in the House of Representatives or the elected Houses of Germany, Britain, Norway and even of Taiwan. There has not been the same opportunity of time but somehow in those democratic houses there is far more respect and far more fair and open debate on different points of view without getting into the character of one another.

This is a fault that I see in this House and I hope all members in this room will try to change that attitude. I know we do not now have the filibustering or the ringing of the bells but we had a demonstration of sorts in the Senate that I think was really not necessary. I do not think political gains were made by withholding for almost a year a bill that this government put forward. That did not serve the purpose. It did point out that we have some shortcomings I think we should address.

I often listen to debate in this House and I think Canadians are judging parliamentarians on the basis of what they have been able to see and pick up here. A negative point of view, whether from the opposition or from the government side, is generally sensationalized in the media the next day. Right now I could make such an outlandish statement that there would probably be five phone calls in my office and I would get all kinds of ink. That is the way I could get some media coverage and probably indicate to my constituents that I was actually here and participated in debate. I believe those things happen all too often.

The throne speech brought forward the idea of trying to find some common ground among all elected members of Parliament to find a way of uniting Canada, of keeping this country strong and united notwithstanding some of those differences ingrained for the last 300 years, and that is the job of this House.

• (1640)

Primarily and foremost, I believe within the next 12 to 16 months it is going to be imperative that every one of us elected to this House of Commons put aside some of our political differences, some of our political antagonisms toward one another and find common ground to keep Canada united.