

Government Orders

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I think we may have had a problem with translation. I apologize for my lack of proficiency in the other official language but when the Bloc Quebecois member of the Official Opposition was speaking, the translation I believe was coming across that she was concerned about consultation and that pharmacists and other people in the industry should have more time for consultation.

I was reading it through translation as pharmaceuticals and I could not quite figure it out. That is why I asked the question I did. If the hon. member is listening, we probably had a little problem either with translation or my understanding of what the translator said.

I have listened with some interest to what has gone on this morning. We have had the two official parties in opposition, the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party, both speak on this legislation.

I thought that seven or eight months into the mandate members opposite would have remembered what they said in the first few days of this House. I know that the Bloc Quebecois has a mandate, or so it sees it, in the people who elected them. I think the Bloc members will find out that the mandate is not quite what they thought it was, if ever there is a referendum in Quebec. However, they believe that they have a mandate, first and foremost, to see the separation of the province of Quebec. I may disagree with that but they were democratically elected and I am sure that when they debate issues such as this, they are trying their best to represent the interests of the people of Quebec.

When we first came into this place there was a lot of talk that people were not going to become wildly partisan just for the sake of being wildly partisan, and that when good legislation came forward, members opposite, particularly in the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party, would do their best to support it.

This place works on confrontation. It works on opposition. When legislation comes forward the role of the Official Opposition and other opposition parties is to oppose. But I thought that we had gone beyond that and that no longer was it opposition for the sake of opposition.

This is one of the bills where the members opposite in the Reform Party and the Bloc could have shown that they really did want to make this a different Parliament, and that they really did want to co-operate to bring forward non-contentious legislation.

I do not know where some of the members from the Bloc are coming from, but the people in my community spoke loud and clear prior to the last election. They said they wanted a government whose number one concern was the health and safety of the communities.

The people in my community said it very loudly two years ago when I had to go to Portland Estates because we had a gang problem and people no longer felt safe in their communities. They did not want their politicians to get up here and dance on the head of a pin. They wanted real debate about reforming laws and striking the proper balances so that our criminal justice system reflected the reality and the needs of our communities.

• (1300)

There was a lot of talk about the Young Offenders Act. We heard how it had to be strengthened but at the same time we could not just punish; we had to try to reform. The emphasis had to be on rehabilitation not strictly punishment.

There is no question a level of consultation is needed. But I would say to my colleagues opposite when dealing with this that this is an uncontentious bill. There may be a few items here and there they may wish to change or I may wish to change but surely we can get some agreement that this type of legislation is progressive.

The legislation codifies some of the regulatory regimes dealing with the two acts in question. It makes it a little easier for our law enforcement officials and other people in the judicial system to actually enforce what it is we want. That is safer streets and harsher penalties for those who deal in death with narcotics. They do deal in death and narcotics destroy our communities.

I thought we would have gotten a little agreement but perhaps they slide too easily into old patterns. This was quite interesting.

The Reform Party more than the Bloc has indicated that only the Reform Party can talk about family values. I can say that I would get somewhat nauseous listening to some Reform members leading up to the election.

Members of the Reform Party would condemn past and present members of this place as simply not being able to understand what the people in their communities wanted. They literally contributed a great deal to the feeling that this place and the people who practised the profession of politics somehow lived on the underbelly of life and that we simply looked after self interests and not the interests of the community.

Reformers would always say that they were the law and order party: "We are the only ones who can bring law and order back". I remember debating with my Reform opponent in the election campaign. I can say that party would have locked everybody up and thrown away the key. That is what the Reform Party thought would save communities.

I would have thought that when they got into this place they would have also listened to the other little piece of rhetoric they spiel out occasionally. That is that they are truly different and as Reformers they are the only ones who can reform the way Parliament works.