

Government Orders

Bill C-19, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending the 31st March, 1994—Chapter No. 5.

Bill C-20, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending the 31st March, 1995—Chapter No. 6.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT SUSPENSION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to rise in the House today and do something unusual. I wanted to compliment the Liberals across the way. I wanted to compliment them on the red book.

In my view the red book is an unusual process in Canadian electoral politics. The red book is a departure from the standard fare of Canada's process. The red book actually lays out in front of all Canadians some promises which the party said was its platform and upon which its members would present their issues.

I wanted to compliment them as well on their motives. I believe theirs are pure motives. They do have the best interests of Canada at heart.

● (1705)

While we may have philosophical differences, the fact is we basically want the same things for our children. We want a good education and good jobs for our children. We would like safe streets for our kids and we would like safety nets if our children have serious problems in their lives.

The government has a role to play in those goals. Our government probably has lost some popularity in Canada. I reflect upon some poll results I read the other day. In terms of occupations, politicians were on the bottom rung just being beaten by lawyers. I wondered how we could improve the image of politicians.

I actually explored the red book wondering what my colleagues were attempting to do in terms of improving the image of politicians. I found that a Liberal government would take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in the institutions of government. That is on page 92 of the red book. I went a little farther and found that MPs would be more able to draft legislation. There would be a parliamentary review of some senior Order in Council appointments. I thought that was good stuff. My compliments for those things in the red book.

I did find some inconsistencies. I am sure members did not think the compliments would last forever. There is a disadvantage to first being in opposition and subsequently occupying the government benches. The disadvantage is there is a visible and vocal record. That record is on the use of closure by time allocation.

I refer to some documentation that expresses what the members opposite said not so very long ago: "This government is trampling on the rights of Parliament. A Liberal government would never do such a thing. This is a complete breach of parliamentary practice. It is a shocking display of the inability of the government to come to grips with the fact that it was elected to be responsible to this House of Commons. It was elected to do so and it is not being responsible. It is trampling all over this House".

It goes on: "One thing we are labouring under tonight is a closure motion. I could not go along with that bill without expressing my distaste at the activities of the government. It is a disgraceful performance. The government is obviously fearful of bringing its legislation before Parliament and having it exposed to the light of public scrutiny. If I had introduced legislation of the kind the government has, I would be embarrassed as well. I want to again say in the strongest terms that by using closure in this debate the government has shown complete contempt for democracy".

This is quite a fat document. I could go on but maybe I should stop.

An hon. member: More.

Mr. Hill (Macleod): I hear a cry for more. That is the way the hon. member was talking about closure then, referring to another comment. He sits here dead silent now. He does not dare discuss this issue now because he knows what he said then was right. This is talking about someone else from the other side who had crossed and had the same problem with closure.

I want to make it very plain, the use of time allocation and closure is wrong. It is draconian. They both limit the debate on issues to a time period convenient to the government. They are like a calm and beautiful sea: very appealing to the senses, but a rocky reef lies just beneath the surface. I wonder what it is about crossing from this side to that side of the House. Suddenly the issue seems to be very different.

● (1710)

I also have a great deal of difficulty listening to some of the arguments from members opposite saying that we should swallow the soup of this bill because in it the bill allows us to limit the number of parliamentarians. That one part of the proposal I wholeheartedly endorse. I do not think Canada needs more than 295 parliamentarians. I promise if my colleagues brought a bill to us which said that one thing, they would have wholehearted concurrence from this group of Reformers.