

Mr. Beatty: This Government is committed to openness, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to the concept of ministerial responsibility.

I was interested to listen to the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker)—an Hon. Member whom I respect who is a skilled and experienced parliamentarian—talking about the roles of Ministers, the roles of public servants, and whether or not it was appropriate for public servants to be asked to comment on policy matters or whether a Minister should be doing that. The Hon. Member has served, as a member of the government, on parliamentary committees when public servants have been there, for example, on the Estimates. What is the rule the Liberal chairman followed in parliamentary committees in the days of Liberal rule? It is pretty straightforward, Mr. Speaker. It was the role of Ministers to comment on matters of policy. It was the role of public servants to comment on factual matters and to give technical information. But when questions were raised under Liberal chairmen by members of the Opposition which touched on policy, what would the response be? "It is inappropriate to ask a public servant to be drawn into an essentially partisan debate. Those questions should be directed to the Minister".

That is precisely the position we are taking today in the Government. We are saying it is the role of public servants on a timely and factual basis to provide information to the public and to do so quickly, to do so as fully as possible and to be as helpful as possible when inquiries come from Members of Parliament, the media, or from members of the public. But it is the role of the politicians and not of the public servants to attack or defend policy. If we allow that blurring to take place, coupled with the abuse of public servants the way it took place under the Liberals, we will contaminate the public servants and put them in a position where their effectiveness and their ability to do their job is put into question.

These guidelines which the Prime Minister announced on Friday are designed to take the public servants out of that grey area, to give them clear guidelines on what is appropriate and to put a positive onus on them to be forthcoming in providing information and service to the people of Canada. That is to be the goal of this Government, Mr. Speaker. What we will be doing is ensuring that Canadians have information on a timely basis. We are making every effort to open up the doors and windows. We are hearing already from Canadians coast to coast that they feel the change which took place on September 4 was a change important to all Canadians.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. It being 5.45 p.m. it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 62(9), to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the supply proceedings.

[English]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The question is the following one. Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra), seconded by Mr. Gray, moves:

That, in the opinion of this House, the guidelines issued by the Prime Minister, on November 23, 1984, with regard to the provision of information to the public, are inadequate and retrogressive and confirm the Government's mistrust of and cynicism toward Canadians.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion, the nays have it.

And more than five Members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Call in the Members.

The House divided on the motion (Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra)) which was negated on the following division:

● (1750)

(Division No. 3)

YEAS

Messrs.

Althouse
Angus
Axworthy
Baker
Benjamin
Berger
Blackburn
(Brant)
Boudria
Broadbent
Cassidy
Chrétien
Copps (Ms.)
Deans
de Corneille
de Jong
Dingwall
Epp
(Thunder Bay-Nipigon)
Finestone
(Mrs.)
Foster

Frith
Gagliano
Garneau
Gauthier
Gray
(Windsor West)
Guilbault
(Saint-Jacques)
Heap
Henderson
Hovdebo
Isabelle
Kaplan
Langdon
Lapierre
MacLellan
Marchi
McCurdy
McDonald
(Ms.)
(Broadview-Greenwood)

Mitchell (Ms.)
Murphy
Nicholson (Miss)
(Trinity)
Nunziata
Nystrom
Orlikow
Parry
Penner
Pépin (Mrs.)
Prud'homme
Ris
Robichaud
Robinson
Rodriguez
Rompkey
Tardif
(Richmond-Wolfe)
Tobin—53.

NAYS

Messrs.

Andre
Attewell
Beatty
Bernier
Bertrand (Mrs.)

Binns
Bissonnette
Blackburn
(Jonquière)
Blais

Blais-Grenier (Mrs.)
Blenkarn
Blouin (Mrs.)
Bourgault (Mrs.)
Boyer