

Summer Recess

Canadians who might come and visit us in this House, that is for sure.

Mr. Speaker, I would have liked my comments to be more objective, more positive because, although I think I wasn't biased my remarks might not have been as dispassionate as I would have hoped. But when you represent, as I do, a riding with 43 municipalities, 75,000 people at least, 53,500 voters more or less, and an unemployment rate which fluctuates between 17 and 30 per cent you know that those people as other Canadians suffer from the same rate of inflation. They would have a lot of things to tell us, lots of advice to give us. At the present time a poll is being taken concerning some amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act. We are not there. We are here doing God knows what. In the meantime our constituents have to look after their problems by themselves. One of my voters wrote to me to give me a piece of his mind because he found that I was hard to get in touch with. I understand that. I go on television on Saturday morning in Rimouski on the French channel—

An hon. Member: When they are not on strike.

Mrs. Côté: You understand his problem and I understand it too. I have sympathy for his concerns. He took the trouble of writing to me to explain how he was living through that, the strikes, the inflation, the energy problem, a problem which became more serious ever since the Conservative Party was in power. Fortunately, it was in power only nine months otherwise one wonders what might have happened afterwards. We are trying to solve the energy problem to the satisfaction of all Canadians. That particular constituent gave me his suggestions, his ideas. You cannot expect every citizen, every voter to take the time to write to you to tell you their experience and what you should do to be of greater service to them. Today we are dealing with the issue of tax agreements between the government of Canada and the provinces. We are not taking part in it, we cannot tell our people what is happening. We feel sort of powerless, but it is a self-imposed situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the motion moved by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs today has become a pressing necessity. I think it is unfair to waste our time and our money in such a manner, and to deprive people who have honestly worked for months at our service from well-deserved holidays. The present situation, that is closure being applied to an adjournment motion is an aberration because nobody here who has worked honestly, who has been assiduous, positive, openminded and constructive should be embarrassed to agree to an adjournment. Above all, we should not be afraid to meet our constituents. Mr. Speaker, I think that my time is almost up. I ask the understanding of my colleagues. This situation is the first of its kind, and I hope it will not happen again.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It has come to my attention that the reading room and the library have closed down. This is very unusual. In my 16 years in the House of Commons, whenever the House has sat the library and the reading room have been kept open.

I wonder if the Chair would look into this matter and report back to hon. members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Yes, I will, and as soon as I have information on the matter I will report to the House.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak about this motion I must begin by saying that, despite my admiration for the hon. member for Rimouski (Mrs. Côté), I could not disagree with her more fundamentally. She suggests that Parliament and the provision of debate in this institution are a waste of time. I find that very difficult to accept. I know the hon. member speaks with a great amount of sincerity and feeling, but I must say that I am surprised that she would tend to treat the institution of Parliament so loosely.

If we believe in parliamentary democracy and the right to freedom of speech, then we must ensure that the rights and privileges of Parliament are always secure. I think those rights and privileges are very sacred. After all, Parliament is the foundation of and very fundamental to our basic freedoms, and to suggest that we might be better off without it frightens me very much. I have been here for 13 years and I have seen an erosion of the rights and privileges of individual members of Parliament. We as individual members of Parliament obtain our rights, privileges and powers, whatever they may be, from this institution, and I would hate to see them eroded further.

By virtue of a closure motion today we have a further contempt for and erosion of the spirit and privileges of this institution. I believe tyranny begins when parliamentary debate ends.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: We are being forced by a closure motion to adjourn at this time when there are very important issues facing this country. I too would like to get back to my constituency to deal on a first-hand basis with the people who sent me here, but at the same time I must say that I am somewhat embarrassed by the report card I must take back to them because the issues which were with us when this session began are still with us today, and in fact have been complicated and aggravated in many respects. We are sitting here in an extended sitting, which is quite unusual, but we are sitting here because there is, was and continues to be a postal crisis which is causing untold hardships and costing millions of Canadians across the country many millions of dollars.

The House has stood by. I believe it has accepted its responsibility, and it has produced some results. We now have a mediator, and we are all hopeful that the work of that