

Government Orders

Again I want to put forward some constructive ideas to the government. I think that this government is probably one of the best manipulators of the government communications systems that I have ever seen. It is an expert in the power of proper packaging. It is so expert that I believe it actually fools a lot of the national media on many occasions.

This is something that I am really concerned about. I am concerned about the fact that the government itself, day in and day out, plays gymnastics with figures. This is what leads to the frustration which ultimately causes a breakdown in the language and decorum of this place. I am not standing here condoning it, but what I am saying is if we are truly going to have some kind of substantive reform in the way this nation's board room is going to function, then we have to get back to basics.

Here is where we should begin. If we are presenting specific questions on issues which all sides of the House know are of national concern, then it would seem to me that the government could go a long way toward reducing some of the frustration in this House by being a bit more specific in its responses, by being a bit more substantive.

We are at a position in this country where the economy, the mood and the spirit is so fragile that people want all of us, on all sides of this House right now, to do things that galvanize the will of this country, to do things that pull it together. I think that we could probably begin that process with the government, in the tone of its approach, maybe assuming some more of the collective responsibility.

I wanted to refer to the member from the New Democratic Party the other day who spoke on this very motion. He said that he felt that the government was basically putting forward this motion in a way that language and decorum needed to be changed. There seemed to be a suggestion that there was more of a problem on this side of the House rather than the government side. I would suggest to the government that it is partly its responsibility for reform, decorum and language clean-up here. When we participated in debate here, we should not be standing up with papers prepared for us by bureaucrats and officials and throwing statistics back and forth. I think we have to get beyond that and get into the spirit and listen to the frustration and the pain that our constituents are talking about.

This is sort of a motion of self-analysis today on all sides of the House. No one is claiming that they have any book on how to behave in this place. I think that we can all express our point of view as to why we become frustrated. Naturally the government can say to us: "You know that we are in a box in terms of expenditure control here. You know that we are not the only country in the world that is having difficulty". That is fair.

In the process of debate I would suggest that if the government is truly sincere in asking for radical change to decorum and to language then maybe it should participate in the process by being a little more substantive and creative in putting forth its answers on policy. Maybe it should also be a little bit more receptive to accepting ideas and policy from members of the opposition.

Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, a little later I want to speak on this motion in a very non-partisan way. I would hope that that is the kind of attitude we would have. However, I would like to ask a question of the member for Broadview—Greenwood. He seems to be talking about the government a great deal and its kinds of answers.

I was taken the other day with a speech made by the member for Crowfoot who has been here a long time and who has a lot of concern, as does the member who just spoke. He said it did not seem like the rules of the House were being carried out to any great extent. A lot of these long preambles in Question Period and the innuendoes that come out of them may be part and parcel of this too. I am not taking anything away from the kinds of answers given.

I would be interested in what the member would think about putting questions into a more precise and concise form without long preambles containing innuendo that tends to elicit this pack mentality that seems to develop around this place. I would be interested in his comments on that particular point.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, if I understand the member for Sarnia—Lambton correctly he is suggesting that the preambles are too long, or is he suggesting that in the preambles there tends to be a bit of a shot taken before we get to the substance of the question?

I think that is a fair point, but it goes back to my point. I think we have a mood of confrontation and frustration here and the nation is actually a mirror of the frustration. We are emissaries of the mood of the nation. That mood is very low, very frustrated, very up tight, because there is perceived to be—I put my emphasis on the word "perceived"—a government that is not listening and not