

these final stages. I hope and believe that hon. members behind us on this side of the House will stay with this agreement. It has not been made an order of the House; it is one of those gentlemen's agreements which has been made on the basis of good will. But it is extremely difficult for the House Leaders to go among their back-benchers and get agreement on this sort of thing when statements about the opposition are made such as were made yesterday by the Prime Minister.

Not only did we reach agreement about what we should do this morning, but two days ago we reached agreement that the report stage and third reading of the CNR financing bill would be put through without debate. Again, last Friday we reached an agreement on the floor of the House that even though a point of order had been raised in connection with the ambient air bill upon which a ruling had to be made, the debate should nevertheless be concluded and when Your Honour had given your ruling, as you did on Wednesday, there would be no further debate.

The fact is that the four House Leaders are getting along well. We have good relations. We exercise good will. It just so happens that the Government House Leader is not here today, but if he were here and felt free to speak I believe he would agree with us that what has taken place constitutes an interference with the job which has been assigned to us.

My plea to the Prime Minister is that he cease and desist from making remarks, such as those he made yesterday and has made a number of times, showing contempt and derision, for such remarks destroy good will and slow down the work of Parliament. May I say in passing that when the Prime Minister talks about delay and obstructionism he does not know the meaning of those words—he has not been here long enough. The kind of delay and obstruction which took place in the past just does not take place today. In fact, under today's rules it cannot take place.

When the Prime Minister says that the government must do something about the rules, I remind him that four times since the Liberals came back into power in 1963 they have changed the rules on the basis of government majorities. The rules are the way they want them, so why this talk about further changes in the rules, further streamlining of Parliament? Hon. members opposite have got the rules they want. Indeed, they said they had tricked us into passing some they did not really care about. But my point is, that the charge of obstructionism comes from one who, I am afraid, does not sense the spirit of this institution and does not understand it. I say that this institution has served the country well for over a hundred years and it can and will continue to do so. But it becomes very difficult when the gentleman who happens to be the Prime Minister of Canada treats this place with contempt and derision as he does far too often. I did not think of those words; they are the words he himself used when describing what happened in a certain incident a while ago. What is hard on this Parliament is not delay, not obstruction, not debate, not critical

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examination of government proposals; what is hard on this Parliament is treating it with contempt.

I recognize that there are no precise Standing Orders or citations that deal with this kind of situation and I realize why there are not. This sort of thing is not expected from hon. members. But there are citations on pages 98 and 99 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition which say, as the hon. member for Peace River pointed out, that anything that would be a contempt of court has to be so treated in the House of Commons as well. There should not be disorderly, contemptuous or insolent language or behaviour, or other disturbing conduct. I think these propositions are axiomatic. But if this Parliament is to get along there has to be good will, and I believe we can have it and go forward on that basis.

I hope the House will agree that I have kept to the mood in which I said I rose. I am not standing here to return blows. I am standing here on behalf of the Parliament of Canada, the people's Parliament, pleading that there be a cessation of contempt and derision, that Parliament be allowed to do its job. If it is allowed to do so, I believe we shall continue to serve the best interests of the people of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: As I suggested a moment ago, I should recognize the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) who has given the Chair the same notice as the hon. members who have just spoken. The hon. member for Lotbinière has the floor.

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I have taken cognizance of statements made yesterday by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to a group of students from the universities of Montreal and Quebec. I subsequently met these students myself and was able to see the results of the Prime Minister's shattering and insidious statements about Parliament. I felt it was my duty to joint our efforts with those of the leaders of the two other opposition parties in order to show "the other side of the coin" in an attempt to restore Parliament's prestige in the eyes of the Canadian people.

• (11:30 a.m.)

In his speech to a group of students yesterday, the Prime Minister seized the opportunity not only to minimize the part played by the opposition, but also to launch a regular attack on the latter's position with regard to legislative measures. That could be considered as a political manoeuvre, but, and this is more serious, he stated that the opposition had no valid part to play and that it hindered good government.

To support his contentions, the Prime Minister quoted doubtful Parliamentary statistics, as is shown by those mentioned by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). He quoted those figures which gave only one side of the picture, stating that, if Parliament's work is not progressing more rapidly, the fault lies with the opposition whose only purpose is to create obstacles and to "get" the government through attrition.