

*Government Orders*

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are about to rise. Thank you for your attention.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Baker:** A question, please.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** A question?

[English]

**Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

I wonder if he could relate to the House what he was going to say before he got cut off.

**Mr. Gauthier:** That is a very good question. I was about to say that I have, over the years, given notice on the Order Paper of several changes which I would like to see. For example, I would like to see that when the bells of the House are ringing to call members for a vote that standing committees of the House should interrupt or suspend their sittings to allow members to come here and vote. There would be no great harm in doing that, and it would allow all of us to be here and do what we are supposed to be doing. I think it would be a positive step that committees would adjourn or suspend when the bells are ringing, calling members to the vote.

**An hon. member:** Tell us more.

**Mr. Gauthier:** I think that the changes proposed here would also be improved if, for example, the transparency of our work was more evident. I think committees could be televised. I believe that we should choose two or three committee rooms and improve the message by possibly televising more proceedings.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important points in this reform proposed by the government is that it will reduce the time of debate; they would have us believe that by sitting less, we would give the people of Canada better value.

[English]

May I just end my remarks by referring to an editorial which the House leader used yesterday in this House which I think needs to be responded to and that is the editorial in *The Ottawa Citizen* of yesterday. *The Ottawa Citizen* had an article stating that the reforms may aid credibility and it goes on and gives its support to these proposals.

This may be the opinion of the editorial board of *The Ottawa Citizen*, but they should try to demonstrate for us in this House how these proposed changes could restore the credibility of the House of Commons. I doubt very much that these changes would do this.

The proposed changes they mention give MPs more time to spend away from the House, reduce sitting days, cut the length of speeches, limit the time for debating bills or borrowing authority, limit the number of Commons committees meeting at one time or other. Does all this improve the credibility of this House? No, Mr. Speaker.

There are perhaps other changes that could restore credibility: a reduction in the level of partisanship, for example. The majority of MPs here are dedicated, hard working, serious men and women who do their best to represent their constituencies. Perhaps, and I alluded to that a few minutes ago, the media feels there is a lack of credibility. Maybe the cynicism that colours their perception of this House should be changed. That is possible also.

As well, they find it difficult to move, as I said previously, to more than the Question Period. They have not, in my view, given serious coverage to the committee work of this House. If Parliament is irrelevant, and I disagree with that statement that *The Ottawa Citizen* makes, it is in my view time for us all here, the four estates, to look at ourselves seriously. The editorial states: "Our political leaders are diverting attention away from the seat of democracy by relying on commissions". That is possible.

*The Ottawa Citizen* should be able to make the connection between the intent of the proposed rules and the desire of the government to draw less attention to its vastly unpopular policies and fiscal mismanagement. I do not think this editorial is very helpful. If the editors of *The Ottawa Citizen* could only have gone back to their drawing board and, very seriously, put this proposal before a group of persons who could have helped them understand it, it would have been much better and much more fruitful.

In closing, I have one proposal. There are, as I said at the beginning of my speech, two sets of rules: the written rules, the Standing Orders, and the unwritten rules, the conventions, the practices, the methods and everything else. In the unwritten rules it is said that the opposition chairs three standing committees of the House of Commons: Scrutiny of Regulations, Public Accounts, Management and Members' Services. Those