

Supply

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, it has been suggested here this afternoon that this motion should never have come forward. It has to do with integrity in government. The last NDP speaker suggested it was very painful for him to get up and talk about this, but he seemed to enjoy it very much once he got going, if there was anyone here to witness it. All afternoon the Tories have been suggesting that this motion should never have come forward.

I want to ask my colleague from Broadview—Greenwood, if it should not come forward then in what forum would it be decided to discuss integrity in government? If this is not the forum, what is? Would this not be the appropriate place to discuss it if the wording of it was not just right? That is something we could discuss. Talking about integrity in government when there is so much cynicism today about politicians I would think there is no more appropriate forum to discuss it than here in the House of Commons.

Mr. Mills: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the government is really reviewing the commitments of the Prime Minister. Let us forget the fact that we condemn the government because that is part of the interaction. Let us talk about the substance of the motion which reads in part: "That this House condemn the government for its continued failure to establish and to adhere to a clear and high standard of public sector ethics". It was the Prime Minister who in 1985 made this one of his priority issues. Without the condemnation words, the rest of these words are pure Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, I want to address the subject brought forward by this motion which is public sector ethics. First I want to make a comment on the bringing of this motion before the House of Commons this very day.

As most members I am sure are aware, and I hope the public is aware, we have a process in the House of Commons known as supply. Supply is the voting of funds to the government. It is what the taxpayers will be required to turn into the public coffers out of their pockets to support the services and programs, that we through the Parliament of Canada provide to the people of Canada at their expense.

Everybody in Canada knows the difficulties we are facing financially, the burden of our national debt, the difficulties caused by our annual deficit. In fact I am sure if members opposite asked Canadians one by one what was the major concern or the number one issue, each one would say it was the economy. In fact in the presidential election there was a phrase: It is the economy, stupid. The concern about the economy is on the mind of every Canadian.

Supply days provide the opposition with the perfect opportunity to bring these economic issues and concerns to the floor of the House of Commons. Unemployment across Canada which is of great concern to all Canadians and presumably to the members of the opposition, the state of the national debt as I have said, job opportunities, employment opportunities for Canadians, programs to create employment opportunities, could all be debated in this House this very day. However the opposition chooses to bring before this House for a day-long debate the question of public sector ethics.

Nobody is saying that public sector ethics is not important. Nobody is saying that it is not important for Canadians to have confidence in their parliamentarians, in their government, but surely members of the opposition recognize and realize that the number one issue out there among our fellow Canadians is the state of the economy, the concern for employment and that sort of thing.

While I am prepared to debate and consider ethical problems I would rather be addressing the subject of concern to all Canadians, that is the state of the economy and the opportunities for employment for our young Canadians. However since members of the opposition choose to bring to this House of Commons the subject of public sector ethics let me debate that point.

I was asked by the government House leader to participate in this debate and I understand why. I have a long-standing interest in the subject. In years past I have brought before this House of Commons legislation on the subject of conflict of interest and ethics. I have debated the issue on several occasions.

I should have known that was the least concern for members of the opposition, that is to say the establishment of a code of conduct for members of Parliament, for government officers and officials. All they wanted to