

Summer Recess

awareness on my part if I could not speak about the problems of Rimouski and Témiscouata, a rural area which needs assistance and has an absolutely shocking unemployment rate, while we are wasting a million and a half dollars in this place. I must admit that I would have put this money to better use in my own area, and if I do not know what is going on there, how can I speak about it?

We must therefore go back to our ridings. We must therefore sacrifice our Saturdays or Sundays. How much time does this leave us for our families? If a member of Parliament has to become a slave to his job, it is time to change something in our rules, Mr. Speaker, because if members of Parliament have certain rights—and I think that they are abused at times—do the citizens who have elected us not have any? I am speaking about the right to meet their member of Parliament, the right to talk about what goes on in this place, the right to ask questions about the bills we pass that will influence their lives, about how we are shaping the society in which they will have to live, about how we are preparing the future for their children and ours. We must therefore sacrifice yet another day. What remains for our own family? What shall we do finally about our families? Are we going to forget them? Does the Canadian society really ask this of its members of Parliament? We are 282 in this place to represent a population of something over 23 million—

An hon. Member: 24 million!

Mrs. Côté: —24 million. We are, therefore, in a privileged position. It is a great thing for someone to be elected to a parliament anywhere in the world. The question that we must ask ourselves to day is this: Are we really working positively? When I see certain things and certain actions and when I hear certain speeches, I ask myself some serious questions about democracy in Canada, and I have to wonder who has only rights and who has only responsibilities or duties.

In our system, the opposition has the right to speak. I agree with that. But when that right is changed into tyranny, when the compulsion to speak at any cost becomes tyrannical, I submit that we are bordering on anarchy. When we are detaining citizens who did a good job, and by that I mean members of Parliament who did their jobs, the people working for the House of Commons who are here with us, the people at the Printing Bureau, the translators, the cleaning staff, all those people are unfairly compelled to remain here today in order to listen to what? I would rather not answer. I would rather not know the answer either. Something is disheartening, Mr. Speaker—the more they speak, the more they repeat themselves. I do not want to pass judgment on my predecessors, but I tell myself that at some point we should attack the problem, we should especially agree on how we are going to represent our constituents, how we are going to manage the affairs of Canada.

While we are here practically talking about nothing, there is in preparation something absolutely unique in Canada, if not on the American continent. I refer to the economic summit. I will not believe that no Canadian is interested in knowing what is going to happen there. But in the meantime, we are forcing the public to disperse their interest to follow what is or is not being said here. To some extent it is our own fault if they are not aware of what this country is about to experience, what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) succeeded in organizing, the meeting of the leaders from the seven most industrialized nations in the world, to discuss the problems of the haves and have-nots, while we are here wasting one and one half million dollars. Fortunately, there is a way out in the Standing Orders, otherwise we would still be sitting here at Christmas of next year. All that time, we have shirked our responsibility to tell our fellow citizens or allow them to hear what the country is experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, when I first came here, this is some sort of story, I met a reporter who asked me: Where would you rather be, here in the House of Commons making speeches, taking part in the legislative process and so on, or in your constituency meeting people? I must admit I was somewhat taken aback. However, I answered, "If you ask me what I would rather do, certainly I would rather be in Rimouski and in Témiscouata meeting the people, seeing what they are doing, what they need, how we could better help them." The gentleman from the press smiled, and I wondered what was so funny. He told me: "You amaze me. Probably you are new here, but many MPs would rather be here in Ottawa."

In the House of Commons everything is generally quiet, nobody is disturbed. If nobody comes to ask you to answer the phone, you will not go. Therefore, you will not know what is going on in your area. Is it possible that the House of Commons has become, for some, a kind of haven away from their constituents? If such is the case, it is high time we adjourned. Because there are some that need to go back in the field to see how the world is breathing. It is high time. Maybe this is why we are still here on July 17, to do what? Are we bringing anything positive to Canadians? We did not change the inflation rate 0.01 per cent. If anything, we contributed to it by keeping everybody here. But it is appalling to have a system which operates that way. Painstakingly, since the beginning of the session, the government managed to get some important legislation passed for the good of the Canadian people. No thanks to the opposition, it didn't happen with its help either. Every time a major piece of legislation was introduced, closure had to be imposed to get it passed.

Mr. Speaker, it would seem, and I have made inquiries in that respect, that it is the first time closure has to be imposed on a motion of adjournment. Allow me to say that this is no sign of progress, not at all. To my mind, it is a step backwards. It is about time that we should straighten this matter out because we are certainly setting a bad example for the young