

*Government Orders*

There are a few specific points I want to make, but before doing so let me reflect on what my friend, the minister of fitness and amateur sport, has been saying. More to the point, let me reflect on the signal which he sent today. I thought it was, I say to him, a fairly sad day for him. Here is a fellow who has the reputation of being quite a brilliant lawyer, a man who in his former capacity as Deputy Speaker was one of the guardians of this place, one of the guardians of Parliament, of the rights of Parliament, and of the rights of private members. Here today he had really come full circle, with the spectacle of his standing there and saying something that he clearly does not believe. He read it well, but his heart was clearly not in it. The proof of the pudding, I say to my friend from Kamloops, the House leader for the third party here, was the minister's fairly nasty aspersions aimed at the member for Kamloops. That is not the minister of fitness and amateur sport. That is not the former Deputy Speaker whom we have all come to know and to like. We understand. We do not condone, but we understand that the man is not in his element today. He has been shoved a piece of paper and he has been told to stand and read it, or else. He does not believe what he said. Certainly he does not believe that we ought to have less opportunity to hold a government accountable, one of the principles that in his former capacity as Deputy Speaker he not only espoused but defended.

• (1745)

I am particularly disappointed in his performance today. On reflection, I say to him this is one night he should watch the rerun. He should really, before the night is out, sit back and watch when they play back today's proceedings of the House on television. He might want to come in tomorrow and not only apologize to the House, but to himself for that unseemly performance a few minutes ago.

If we were looking for some evidence that maybe the government is not stating up front what its real agenda is, or if we were looking for some proof that maybe there is something here that does not meet the eye or that on first blush does not look to be the case, it seems to me the proof of it is in the minister's final act before he sat down.

Here is what I mean. We hear the government spokesmen, the people on that side of the House, defend this in particular terms. They defend it as an improvement. That is the first argument. This is an improvement

over what are the existing rules of Parliament. That is one of their arguments.

These people defend it in terms of more accountability and more opportunity to do the work that we are sent here to do. They defend it as a good idea that ought to stand up under scrutiny. They do all that, but then we watched what the minister did in his final act just a moment ago before he concluded his speech and sat down.

What did he say after a couple of days of debate? This is just the third day of debate on this issue. We have had a total of five or six hours altogether on an issue which will impact on the rights and abilities of every member of this Parliament, all 295 of us. It is an issue that will infringe on the ability of all 27 million Canadians to petition this place to have their issues raised in this place. An issue that important ought first of all to be debated more than four, five or six hours. That is all we have been debating it.

The minister espouses the importance of accountability in Parliament, says that we must do it right here and that the ideas he promotes on behalf of the government can stand up to scrutiny. He has done in his final act today something which puts the lie to everything he and his colleagues have said. He said that we have to rush this through, that we have to bring in closure and that is what he did in his final act: he gave notice of closure.

He said in unvarnished and unquoted terms to us and to the people of Canada: "Enough is enough. Tomorrow we are going to shut this place down. Tomorrow this debate is going to be over". That is in effect what he said in his last sentence or two.

He is the same man who in all his other mouthfuls in that 20-minute speech had been saying that we ought to be accountable, that we ought to scrutinize this. "This is such a brilliant idea", he is saying, "it will stand the scrutiny and the light of day". Having done that, he rushes in and says: "Enough light of day. Let's ram this through. Let's let the government use its majority as it did on the goods and services tax, on the free trade agreement, and on so many issues that are unpopular across this country". It just moves in its majority and rams it through.

That the minister who did that should be a former Speaker and should be a man who holds Parliament normally in such high regard is a particular disappointment for me, I say to him, and I believe for all members of this Chamber.