

Extension of Sittings

The real victim of the Free Trade Agreement will be this place, this Chamber. While there are people being thrown on scrap-heaps and communities closed down, ultimately the most serious casualty of the FTA will be this place, inasmuch as this Government has treated this Parliament, this House of Commons, with great disdain and arrogance—and it does so because it fears this place. It fears what will be heard in this place.

We have had four years of efforts to bring down the curtain totally and completely, to close the doors, to try to conceal and hide the real facts, and we are starting a new round.

We on this side concede that the majority opposite will exercise its will. This Government no longer has a conscience such that it is moved to respond to the kind of balance of interests of which I have spoken.

I heard one of my colleagues earlier today commenting on the privilege of having the opportunity to stand up in a civil society and debate issues. The problem we face today is that we no longer have a Government that recognizes civility. It does not recognize that Parliament works through a proper and appropriate balancing of the rules, conventions, practices, and understandings on the part of all Members. Parliament does not work on the basis of the raw, naked exercise of power. Rather, it works on the basis that political Parties will serve, in turn, in government and opposition, with the recognition that the rights of Parliament have to be protected by all in order that it can function properly on behalf of the people.

That is a lesson that went unlearned during the first term of this Government, and it is one that continues to go unlearned today.

It is for all of those reasons that we on this side are going to fight as strongly and as mightily as we can against the hijacking of this place. The Tories treat Parliament in the way that they treat ordinary Canadians; that is to say, with arrogance and with indifference. We are now going right back to where we were immediately before the election? This is a government for those of privilege and power and one which is not prepared to serve the interests of the majority of Canadians, the same majority which voted against this Government in the last election.

We will do all that we can to ensure that the rules of this House are preserved. In that way, when the day comes that there is in place a government that is

prepared to act in the interests of ordinary Canadians, this Parliament will have the opportunity to serve those interests in the appropriate fashion.

We will support this amendment, and we do so because we can do nothing but have pity for the poor organization of this Government, a government which failed in its ability to manage this House yesterday and had to be bailed out. Never let it be said that Liberals are not charitable and generous, even to Tories. We will help the poor Deputy House Leader (Mr. Lewis) out of his misery and show him how to make the House work in a proper way. However I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the motion that caused all of this was totally unnecessary. Had the Government permitted Parliament to take its natural course, leading to a full parliamentary debate, including committee hearings, in respect of the FTA, it would not have had to resort to the kind of parliamentary terrorism inherent in its motion.

We on this side want to have the opportunity to put on the record one more time exactly what this Government is doing to distort and destroy this Chamber, a Chamber which is so essential to all Canadians.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour to be able to stand in my place today and participate in this debate, this being the second time I have had the opportunity to participate in the debates of this House.

As a new Member, I have the greatest respect for this House. I have always considered it to be a forum for open debate and thoughtful reflection, resulting in well formed and well thought out legislation. As well, it is an institution that takes into account the rights and opinions of minority groups.

While I continue to have respect for this Parliament, I must say that, having completed my first week, I am disappointed with some of the Members, and particularly some of the Members opposite. Certainly I continue to have the greatest respect for those Members on both sides of the House who are interested in the democratic process, who are interested in engaging in open debate. I am, however, disappointed in the senior members of the Government who are ramming Bill C-2 down our throats, to use an oft-quoted phrase.

Having sat in this House for one week, I have seen the Government acting as a street bully, and this is a view of government to which I have not been privy heretofore.