

Government Orders

members to come; they tell them that they are welcomed and have the right to come. Indeed, the members of the Bloc were told to sit there, not to vote, and remain quiet as much as possible.

I want to re-establish the facts and name my colleagues who attended. There were, among others, the member for Hull—Aylmer, the member for Shefford, the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, and myself. I believe it is really important to state the facts regarding this issue.

An hon. member: Put that in your pipe and smoke it whip.

Mrs. Venne: This afternoon we discuss the wishful thinking of the member for Jonquière. We, the members of the Bloc, asked yesterday for an extension of the sitting; the New Democrats and the Conservatives rejected that request, including the member for Jonquière.

An hon. member: He does not want us to talk.

An hon. member: This is unbelievable.

An hon. member: He does not want us to discuss his business.

Mrs. Venne: Mr. Speaker, it is rather surprising that the member for Jonquière would vote against having an extended sitting on his own motions, that is against a discussion on the substance of his amendments. This is truly unbelievable. He told us that he would like to see umbrella committees—

[*English*]

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I do not think the record should go uncorrected in that regard. There was not a vote on extension of the hours. There was a test of the House and a formal vote was not conducted. So it is incorrect to say the member for Jonquière voted against it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Venne: In any case, the member for Jonquière rose to oppose—

An hon. member: It is not often that he stands up.

Mrs. Venne:—extending the sitting hours. I want to make that clear.

For the moment, I will keep talking about those umbrella committees for the yes and the no sides that the member claims to want to integrate to the bill by way of his motions. He now asks that these umbrella committees for the yes and the no sides now be included in the act in order to help limit expenses.

As the bill stands now, there could be any number of committees in any given riding, throughout Canada. The government says that it will put a ceiling on expenses, that a maximum of 56 cents per voter will be allowed; yet, the number of referendum committees is unlimited.

Based on my understanding of this bill, a resident of British Columbia could very well register in my constituency—why not?—since there is nothing against it in the present legislation. I do not see any logic in this. If some members find this logical, so much the better, but I personally do not see anything logical in there.

Mr. Lapierre: They can spend \$8.5 million.

Mrs. Venne: As my colleague for Shefford says, the committees can spend \$8.5 million; that is certainly not what I call a limit on expenses. It may be the limit for the expenses incurred by the Conservatives, but for people like us who are used to democracy, this is not what we call limiting expenses.

What I find praiseworthy are the efforts made by the member for Jonquière when he decides to propose amendments to the referendum bill, in particular his Motion No. 35, at paragraphs (d) and (e). I would like to quote these provisions because I think it is important to emphasize this point. I know you have read these motions yesterday, but I must confess it was a bit fast for me to understand. This is why I am going to read them a bit more slowly, so we can better grasp the meaning of Motion No. 35, more particularly paragraph (d).

It is to prescribe, for each province, the maximum amount of referendum expenses that may be incurred by either referendum committee, that is the one supporting the referendum question or the one opposing it.

Paragraph (e) prescribes the maximum amount of referendum expenses that may be incurred by either referendum committee throughout Canada or in two or