

I believe that the motion is well intentioned but it does contain a number of flaws. As a result of that I cannot possibly support it.

Let me raise a few of those points because this does raise some very important questions. For example, in one of the comments there was a statement that the government's agenda is coming through. Of course the government's agenda is coming through. It must, it has a majority, it has a moral responsibility for making absolutely sure that what it says it will do and the way it interprets that will be carried out.

There is a suggestion that direct democracy is important and I think most of us would agree that it is. We must make awfully certain that direct democracy does not replace the judgments that we have to make as duly elected members of Parliament.

One can see the danger. For example, the opposition party that brought forward this motion had direct involvement recently, last night, on direct democracy. The leader said that perhaps he would support this and needs to check this out to make sure it is not flawed. That is another flaw.

The other thing is when we start changing something like a budget we know that if we change one part there are repercussions for other parts. We simply cannot unravel one little part without considering the implications for the other.

I may have time for a final point. I am a little worried that this could lead to ransom by a minority group.

• (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business is now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the motion drops to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should:

(a) amend the Official Languages Act to reflect the philosophy of "territorial bilingualism", which holds that French should be the predominant language of Quebec and English the predominant language of the other provinces, and that federal government services should be available to official language minorities in their own language in any part of the country where there is demonstrable local public demand;

Supply

(b) continue to facilitate the use of English or French in the debates and other proceedings of Parliament, in the records and journals of Parliament, in federal courts, and as the languages of federal legislation; and

(c) refrain from expending monies on those aspects of language which fall under the sole jurisdiction of the provinces.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in making this motion, before we get started I would really like to get the attention of everyone whose minds are already made up.

There will be a lot of automation out there saying if a Reformer is getting up and talking on the Official Languages Act it has to be bad. The Official Languages Act is not working well. Whether one favours it and carte blanche says it has to be good or whether one says maybe it really should be changed, please give a listen to what we are going to say here. Do not prejudge it. Let us go along with the lines of what is good for Canada and what is good for Canadians.

My basic premise here today is that the Official Languages Act has not been working well. It is divisive for us as a country and it is too expensive. It is not just this member for Nanaimo—Cowichan saying so, each and every commissioner has had problems with it. So has the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. So have people across the country. So has the Bloc Québécois and so have les gens de Québec, ainsi que les gens de la Colombie-Britannique. We have all had problems with it. What are we going to do about it?

Listen to the debate this afternoon and as you are doing so I ask you to please put your own minds in gear and ask how we can do it better.

Let us go back in history and I hope to paint you the picture—

The Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. member please put his comments to the Chair. Please try not to use the word "you".

Mr. Ringma: Mr. Speaker, I will try mightily to do that.

Let us collectively look at history and ask how we can improve things. In 1608 New France was founded by Champlain. In 1752 Acadia was conquered by the British and therein was the first and most horrid example of linguistic intolerance. As soon as the Brits conquered Acadia they kicked out all the Acadians. They said: "We do not need your language. We do not need you—out". That is the worse case we have had. Maybe in one sense historically we have improved things, at least from that point.

• (1215)

In 1759 New France was conquered. By the standards of that day, the Brits really made some improvement. They said: "Fine, there will be a tolerance not only of the French language but of the religion". Let us remember in historical perspective that religion has been part of the language equation.