

Supplementary Estimates (A)

second thing which is important with respect to this is that it is part of Parliament's business, not just the government's business, to hold the government accountable. Parliament is not the handmaiden of the government. It will never be, God willing. Parliament's job is to hold the government accountable. The only way we will in our processes hold the government accountable is if we somehow look at our processes and procedures.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is quite right. The examination in committees is next to useless in terms of estimates, and every member knows that. The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) has been concerned about the rights of French-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec. He knows how little opportunity there really is to come to grips with that. But if he had, for instance, the estimates of the Department of the Secretary of State here where the public can see what the government is doing, or is not doing, if that is the case, then I think he would feel he had his day in court on behalf of a constituency which to him is important. This could be repeated 282 times in the House.

What this amendment is all about, as a result of consultation, is not to hold up the government. But it is to provide that balance where we can somehow do our job. We have wrestled with the way in which it can be done. I hope Mr. Speaker finds it appropriate. In fact, if I can give Mr. Speaker some advice, the Chair ought to lean in the direction of finding this amendment appropriate if it can. It expands the rights of members of Parliament and of Mr. Speaker. That is the way in which it is prepared, not as a way to hold up the government.

I think our relationship will continue to be a good one, if we do not insult one another on the floor of the House. It is very important. Having served in both capacities as opposition House leader and government House leader, if I can give my learned friend some advice it is to learn to cool his tongue.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): This is a House of debate and of differences of opinion, but in terms of the operations of government and the operations of Parliament, there has to be some good will. As I said before, it is not my wish to hold up the government; it is not. That wish can be accommodated if we can accommodate each other. This amendment is an attempt to do precisely that. Of course we are prepared to consult; of course we are. We now have something to consult about.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I wonder if I could make a suggestion which modifies slightly the one made by the hon. President of the Privy Council. It seems to me that to try to resolve this before eight o'clock is a little too much, but I believe we have a meeting already set for tomorrow morning. I wonder if we could not come to that meeting with our minds and hearts open, trusting that we can come to something, and that being the case, I wonder whether there could not be an agreement to adjourn

this debate at six o'clock and take some other business tonight. I suggest now that a debate tonight on this subject will just be a repetition of speeches, but we have something about which we could consult tomorrow morning. I believe the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton is prepared to do so. I invite the President of the Privy Council to put this on the table at our meeting tomorrow morning and to ask the Chair to move to some other business at eight o'clock tonight.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that is an eminently excellent suggestion, and I join in the invitation to do that, if I may. If the government House leader wants to take a few minutes to decide what he would like to call, we would be quite willing to deal with whatever business he has in mind this evening.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this new wind of co-operation. There is no need for me to consult anyone now. At eight o'clock tonight, we will proceed with the consideration of the bill on small businesses loans. I sincerely hope that we will reach an agreement tomorrow morning on this motion, otherwise I will notify my colleagues of the order of the day for tomorrow. The proposal of our hon. colleague from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) seems to me to be very reasonable and I am quite willing to negotiate provided, once again, I deal with a serious spokesman for the Conservatives. Tonight we will consider the bill in the name of the Minister of State for Small Businesses (Mr. Lapointe) dealing with small businesses loans. Tomorrow, we will see whether there are any changes in the order of the day.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Agreed.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The understanding of the Chair is that some progress will be made on the subject matter of checking the orderliness of the amendment this evening, and I believe that the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) has indicated that at eight o'clock this evening we will resume the debate on Bill C-17. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles: That this debate is adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until eight o'clock this evening.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2000)

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.