

Government orders

Any objective observer of the deliberations today would conclude that there are certain members in the House who have attempted all afternoon, not to engage in legitimate, intelligent debate, but to disrupt the proceedings in the House. You have been patient and have recognized points of order after points of order in a shameful display by certain members of the House.

If they were truly interested in debating this most important bill before the Parliament of Canada, surely they can show respect for other members in the House but, more importantly, respect for the Chair.

You made a ruling, Madam Speaker. The member for Shefford called your ruling into question and, in effect, accused you of being partisan. I take great exception to that and I am sure the overwhelming majority of members of the House take exception to the absolute insult the member for Shefford has shown to all members here this afternoon.

[Translation]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let me comment briefly on a remark made by the hon. member for Shefford.

The hon. member said he had seen the Chair make a sign to an hon. member on the government benches. It will make things easier if I explain what happened and we will be in a better position to sort out the issues.

First, let me repeat that, according to the pattern we followed all day since the beginning of this debate, it would normally have been the time for a member on the government side to speak. So I simply turned to the parliamentary secretary so that he could tell which member on his side would speak. He told me he would take the floor himself and I agreed.

The previous speaker concluded his speech, I recognized the hon. member and he immediately set out to make his speech. At the same time, a point of order was made. Before I had time to recognize it or even say "point of order", the speech had begun. The law and the rules being what they are, I agreed to explain in detail everything that had occurred. Enough of it, now, let us go on with the debate. That is the reason we are here. The honourable member for Timiskaming.

[English]

Mr. MacDougall: Madam Speaker, I would like to start off by—

[Translation]

Mr. Plamondon: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Richelieu raises a point of order.

Mr. Plamondon: I simply wish to remind the member who criticized us for raising many points of order that I learned that when I sat with the party in office. And to the member for—

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is not a point of order. The honourable member for Timiskaming.

[English]

Mr. MacDougall: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. By entering into today's debate I first want to say to you and to those Canadians who this afternoon may have been watching the ongoing process of the House of Commons and debating of legislation that Bill C-44 is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that all Canadians have seen for a great long while.

I say that for a reason. It goes back to the development of a government in 1984 that recognized the regions of the country, the concerns of those regions and developed policies, programs and economic development in those regions.

In July 1988 the Prime Minister of this country and the Minister of Energy signed a statement of principles in which Hibernia, the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and the premier of Newfoundland had negotiated in order to finalize a legal binding agreement incorporating the principles of the statement.

I had the opportunity a few weeks ago, and it was an historic time to be in St. John's, along with my colleagues from St. John's East, the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, officials of our department, the premier of Newfoundland and the minister of energy to be at the signing of history. At that time there were four former premiers of the province of Newfoundland there. It gave an opportu-