

Routine Proceedings

• (1140)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): I am pleased that my colleagues have now established a certain number of criteria they would like to see applied when a party is recognized as such.

Mr. Speaker, we would also like to benefit from your great wisdom and would appreciate if you could tell us whether the Canada Elections Act takes precedence over the precedents of this House and whether the Canada Elections Act or the legislation dealing with political parties provide for *de facto* recognition within this institution.

Mr. Speaker, if technically, one must register with the Chief Electoral Officer a reference was made by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and the parliamentary secretary I would like some clarification in this respect. I read comments by some of our colleagues in the *Hill Times*, and not that I want to advertise the fact, but it is clear that some of our colleagues tend to emphasize the importance of registration with the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. Speaker, I raised the matter because it keeps popping up every time. We sent you a joint statement that we had formed a political group in this House. We believe this House controls its own destiny and its own rules. I did not imagine the Canada Elections Act and registration with the Chief Electoral Officer in any way affected the recognition of parliamentary groups by this House or their recognition for income tax purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I know you are an eminent lawyer, and I was counting on your insight. Actually, I would be tempted to approach this as a question of privilege, because the question of registration is brought up time and time again. I would like to know how the matter of registration impacts legally on our status here in the House. I wish you would rule on that once and for all. It would also help the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and other members who regularly refer to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I therefore wish to seek the unanimous consent of the House for commenting briefly on the immigration question, since I don't think we have settled the issue of party status, but I raise this question with a

big question mark, and I would appreciate the benefit of your wisdom.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Shefford for his comments, and the other members—

[English]

—the hon. member for Ottawa Vanier, the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands, the hon. member for Kamloops, the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs and the parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

This is very interesting, because the hon. member for Shefford is seeking an interpretation from the Chair respecting certain laws of Canada. A legal interpretation might be very interesting. I am tempted but, unfortunately for the hon. member for Shefford, it is not the Chair's role to interpret the Statutes of Canada. Consequently, I must reject the hon. member's request. I have taken a few moments of the time of the House to discuss a matter which, as I said before, is most interesting but it is an area that is closed to the Chair.

[English]

I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members rule 33. It is very clear.

[Translation]

33. (1) On Statements by Ministers, as listed in Standing Order 30(3), a Minister of the Crown may make a short factual announcement or statement of government policy. A Member from each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly thereon. The time for such proceedings shall be limited as the Speaker deems fit.

[English]

We are bound by the rules here and, as hon. members have said, that is the rule. I think the hon. member for Kamloops said the Speaker's hands were tied. That is certainly the case and, without consent or without a change in this rule, I must say to the hon. member for Shefford that I am not in a position to allow the hon. member to respond.

I want to point out to hon. members, as has been mentioned in argument, and also to the public that this does not mean that the hon. member for Shefford or others who sit in this Chamber outside the recognized parties at the moment do not have a chance to be heard. That would be an interpretation which is not accurate.