

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 16, 1990

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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### POINT OF ORDER

#### HOUSE OF COMMONS PROCEEDINGS

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a point of order from the hon. member for Beaver River.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to express great disappointment over the events in this Chamber yesterday.

I spoke with the government House leader yesterday about the timeframe for the debate on linguistic dualities and the Meech Lake Accord which the government had put forward. He assured me the debate would be going on for three days because it would not be democratic not to let everyone have his or her say. I agreed, and asked him to let me and my office know if there was any change, and he said he would.

After Question Period yesterday the government House leader reiterated in the Chamber what he had told me earlier. The only question was when would be the appropriate time for the vote, so that all members could be present to get their names on the record. In regard to the timeframe, I refer to yesterday's *Hansard* at page 8400, where the government House Leader said:

The debate will continue tonight with 20 minute speeches until such time as the last person speaks. When the last member is finishing speaking we would simply adjourn until tomorrow. That same arrangement would take place on Monday.

Of course, I believed that. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the debate ended almost as soon as it began. After one speaker from each of the three parties, the motion was immediately put and passed. I had left the Chamber shortly before that, as I was due to catch a plane to my riding. I was prepared to speak and could easily have been here when the debate ended. In fact, I arranged

and now, again, have rearranged my travel schedules to accommodate that timetable.

• (1010)

Unfortunately, what we saw yesterday was a sad display of gamesmanship. I find it appalling that an issue so sensitive, so necessary to be looked at in an objective manner, could be scornfully dismissed by three carefully orchestrated speeches.

The issues in the motion yesterday are divisive and are tough issues for all of us as parliamentarians. There is dissent on Meech Lake and linguistic duality in the House and the public knows it. That is why these matters must be debated here.

The real danger to a democracy is when legitimate dissent becomes restricted to only extreme groups far removed from legitimate institutions. That, I believe, is a real danger in the country today, as illustrated by the events of yesterday. I want to put on the record that I am displeased with what went on, and I am sure the Canadian public who watched this on television was equally appalled.

**Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief intervention. Acting on my party's behalf yesterday morning, I met with the government House leader and the House leader of the Official Opposition.

At that time I raised the proposal that the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party had put forward to the government to have an identical motion and, in effect, to have the leaders of each of the three parties speak to the matter and then proceed to other business. I was advised that no, the government was continuing with their efforts to schedule the debate over the next period of time and not just yesterday.

I so advised my leader who had been prepared to cancel her travel plans in order to be here. When I advised her that there would be further opportunities next week to participate in the debate, she decided to go ahead with her plans to travel into Quebec, and did leave, which was an interesting feat given the weather yesterday. That is why she was not in the Chamber