

Mr. Evans: Not much.

Mr. Johnston: However, I urge one thing upon them. Something which crosses my mind as I stand here and as I flip through the Standing Orders of the House—it is not a technical legal question—is that I believe members of this chamber who themselves have mortgages and would benefit from this bill morally should not vote on this issue because they have a direct pecuniary and financial interest in the passage of this bill. I believe it is Standing Order 6, Mr. Speaker. I do not think it has been subject to a judicial interpretation, but it is a logical rule.

There is a moral message here. If one extends the application of that Standing Order, of course, one could deal with old age pensions and a series of other things; but here there is such a direct pecuniary interest—since members of this House who hold mortgages would benefit—that I think it would be most inappropriate for them to vote, and I am sure their abstention from voting would be much appreciated by the Canadian public.

With those brief comments I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing interventions by hon. members on both sides of this House.

[*Translation*]

I am sure the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Roy) will follow suit, and doubtless he will describe many other negative aspects of this bill. On behalf of my electors, I can say that there is nothing in this bill that will ever benefit the electors of Saint-Henri who are tenants. In the city of Montreal, the vast majority of voters are renters, so there is little reason to induce me to vote for this bill.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that you are now having a look at our Standing Orders. I should appreciate knowing what you think about the matter. So, I now give the floor to other hon. members.

[*English*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wonder if the hon. member was really raising a point of order and requesting the Chair to make a judgment. I will look into the matter. At first glance, if the Chair were to go as far as the hon. member seems to wish it to go, it might become a judge on many matters and subjects which are debated in this House, and it might prevent freedom of speech. At the same time, I have to protect freedom of speech.

Mr. Jake Froese (Niagara Falls): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to speak in the House. I am very happy to participate in this debate.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Froese: I have not had the privilege of sitting in this House before, and I did not realize the important position and the confidence Your Honour has in this Parliament. I had a very good experience as I flew home on a plane some three weeks ago. You gave up your more comfortable or better seat

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in the plane for a father and his two children. You moved to the back. I was very happy that I had the privilege of knowing you. You showed not only that you are a gentleman in the House but also that you are a great gentleman in your everyday life, which I truly appreciate.

I come from the riding of Niagara Falls, which is made up of the city of Niagara Falls and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Often in the time I lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake I wondered, if it were not for the war of 1812, whether the capital of Canada would still be Niagara-on-the-Lake and not here in Ottawa. I suppose that is something we really do not know.

History has been made in Niagara-on-the-Lake and, as we are talking about housing policy or something which will relate to reviving the housing industry in Canada, I cannot help but bring to the attention of this House the fact that in the riding of Niagara Falls the question of housing and its importance is not new. However, I want to draw to the attention of the House another factor regarding the area from which I come which is tremendously important to Canada. When I was the lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I had the opportunity of having Mr. John Diefenbaker as a guest of honour to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. There was something he related to me which I did not know. In fact, I was surprised that historians who were very active in our area had not brought this to my attention sooner. Mr. Diefenbaker said that it was in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake—it was Newark at the time—that freedom from slavery legislation was passed 42 years before any other country in the world abolished slavery. At the present time the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has a population of only a little over 3,000. At that time it had a population of not much greater, but there were 1,300 black people living in Niagara-on-the-Lake who had fled across the border.

There is a very interesting thing which I would like to relate to the House and which seems just about impossible. In "Uncle Tom's Cabin" there is a story—which is true—relating to a Negro woman who escaped across the Niagara River by jumping blocks of ice with her child. She was running to freedom. I was not born in the area and did not go there until I was 15 years old, but many a time I stood at the bank of the river, looked across and thought about how impossible this was, until one year in the 1950s when the ice jammed up because of a northwest wind, and one could walk across the Niagara River by jumping from iceberg to iceberg. I take it that was the kind of winter it must have been when that Negro lady came across.

● (1600)

Niagara-on-the-Lake was built at the time when the United Empire Loyalists came to Canada from the United States. It became a place of refuge. The gentleman who was in charge of the armed forces in Upper Canada at that time was Colonel John Butler. He is not noted for his military activities but rather for providing housing and agricultural land for the survival of the United Empire Loyalists.