

Mr. McIlraith: I think it is a bill of major importance to this country and I think there is some urgency in getting it through so that the provinces can make their plans and decisions consequent upon it.

Mr. Knowles: Maybe if the government will have a break of two or three days it might reconsider its intention to delay the implementation of the legislation.

[Translation]

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the house under provisional standing order 39A deemed to have been moved.

HISTORIC SITES—QUEBEC—DEMOLITION OF HOME OF SIR ALEXANDER GALT

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, last October 12, I put the following question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Laing), and I quote:

In view of the fact that the minister, last Thursday night, notwithstanding his wishes, did not have time to finish his remarks on the memorial to Sir Alexander Galt, would he inform the house today of the nature of his project?

Well, we all know now that Sir Alexander Galt's house has been demolished. It is not my intention to revert to the matter. The minister gave explanations the other day. Tonight is not the time to comment on that.

What we want to know is the policy the minister wants to pursue for the present and for the future. There are still some outbuildings adjoining the Dominican Sisters' convent that the Eastern Townships Historical Society would very much like to preserve.

I would very much appreciate a quick decision by the minister, for the reverend Dominican Sisters are in the process of erecting new buildings and it is important that the minister take a decision in this regard before they demolish those outbuildings.

I would also very much appreciate it if the minister would contact the Eastern Townships Historical Society, the vice president of which is Mr. Desmond McKeon. I received,

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this very day, a telegram from the vice president of that society, which reads as follows: [English]

We extend our thanks and congratulations for your efforts to save what remains of the Galt Home. Please continue to fight until Laing promises to save what remains.

[Translation]

Well, the minister can decide to restore the outbuildings and to appropriate a certain amount in order to carry out this project or, following an investigation, he may prefer to purchase part of the property that the Dominican Sisters are ready to sell to the department for the purpose of erecting a monument.

I do want to stress once again the importance of honouring the memory of Sir Alexander Galt, who was member of parliament for Sherbrooke in 1867 and also one of the Fathers of Confederation.

When the minister makes his decision, I would ask him to advise the Eastern Townships Historical Society, as well as to the member for Sherbrooke, so that I may be kept informed of developments in this matter.

[English]

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member for Sherbrooke, I wish to say that I think it is one of the happier circumstances that matters of this nature are being more seriously considered by our people in Canada all the time. It is essential, I think, that we do preserve these buildings and these places that are of historic importance. I want to thank him, and I want to thank the hon. member for Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Asselin), who has persistently brought this matter to my attention.

I think the fact that we were unfortunate in attempting to move the building has not dimmed interest in preserving the Galt home. The other night I did have the opportunity of reminding the house that the previous government of Quebec had undertaken to support, to the extent of 50 per cent, the cost of maintenance of the Galt house, were we successful in moving it. I want to tell the hon. member that this support was not forthcoming from the present government. They withdrew the offer and said they could not carry that. This had no effect whatever on our intentions and hope of moving the building, which was otherwise going to be torn down in any case.