

there be fairness in the application of the official language policy across the country.

He faced some difficult challenges as Leader of the Opposition when an attempt was made virtually to embarrass him on the day that he arrived here as the elected Member of Parliament for Central Nova. He met that challenge head on. I say to you and to all Canadians that there is no person in this country with a better sense of fairness and equity on official languages than the Prime Minister of our country. I can say that without any fear of serious challenge. He has demonstrated time and time again that he understands this country. He has a sense of the country and is prepared to give it leadership.

This Bill is legislation that will be passed by this House. Actions speak far, far louder than words. We will have this legislation which has been considered in very great detail by Members of Parliament. We have had a chance on the part of the Government to assist as much as possible in making sure that the Bill in the form in which it has come forward does reflect the considered views of Members of Parliament from all sides of the House.

It is fine for the Member from Ottawa—Vanier to come forward and try to be purer than pure concerning Bill C-72, but I commend to Members of the House of Commons that we take the legislation as it has been reported to the House by the committee with its amendments, that it go forward from report stage in that form, that we move forward tomorrow and pass it at third reading and send it to the Senate. We can then at the earliest possible date have Royal Assent and have a fair, equitable official languages law in Canada.

• (1640)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** Madam Speaker, I would like to deal more specifically with motion No. 1A on the Order Paper, which is being put forward by my colleague for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). It aims at restoring the original wording of the Bill, that is to restore the concept that the purpose of the Government legislation now before the House is to extend the Official Languages Act.

Historically, what transpired is that the Bill included that extension concept, but before the House Committee to which the Bill was referred an amendment was introduced to take that concept out. If I understood correctly the committee proceedings, it is the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin), who usually acts as a champion of official languages and the French language in particular who, interestingly enough—but since I did not attend the committee, I would like him to explain why he did that.

I read in the committee proceedings that he did so in a spirit of consensus in order I suppose to try and rally the most regressive Members of his party with whom there was difficulty in committee in support of official languages. We are seeing the results. Unmoved, the dinosaurs came back with some 136 amendments they put on the Order Paper in order to

*Official Languages Act*

try not only to completely water down the Official Languages Act, but clearly to try and kill the legislation because as we know the session already is well-advanced. We know we have very little time left, and if each of those amendments were to have been discussed one by one, the legislation would have died on the Order Paper. This is why last week, in the Official Opposition, we challenged the Government to bring in time limitation on the Bill, in order to ensure that the Conservative dinosaurs would not succeed in killing the Official Languages Act.

But to come back to the relevant amendment, what happened in committee in my view is a serious change that significantly weakens the Official Languages Act. To answer the question put by an Hon. Member, let me repeat that it is the Hon. Member for Charlevoix who in committee, to everyone's surprise, put forward that amendment that significantly weakens the Official Languages Act since in fact it deletes from the Act, in clause 2, which is an interpretation clause, therefore a very important clause, a clause that will guide the court when it will interpret the Act, and render a legal decision. In the original wording put forward by the Government, the bill read: "The purpose of this Act is to extend the present laws of Canada relating to official languages to ensure respect . . .". Those are the terms, "to extend the present laws of Canada relating to official languages" that were taken out by the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Charlevoix. Thus, the English version reads:

[English]

—the purpose of the Act is to extend the present laws of Canada relating to official languages, and so on, and to ensure the respect for both languages, blah, blah, blah. This concept, in French, "*renforcer*", and in English, "to extend", has been removed by the amendment, all in an attempt to try to appease the most regressive elements of the Conservative Party.

**Mr. Hawkes:** Not true.

**Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** Yes, read the text of the committee hearings.

**Mr. Hawkes:** You read the committee hearings, you'll find out it's not true.

**Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques):** I have them here. I am being told it is wrong but I will quote it in French because the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin) spoke in French. He said this:—

[Translation]

The Member from Charlevoix says: "You can well understand that I am proposing this amendment for reasons—and if I do so, it is via conciliatory spirit." His intentions were good and I am not questioning them. However, it didn't do much good. In fact, the amendment was agreed, and the Bill is now short a very important provision for the reinforcement of the Official Languages Act, but that didn't satisfy the dinosaurs who made new attempts.