

Oral Questions

The main thing we can do, in my opinion, is to continue to monitor the situation, gather data and eventually draw conclusions which will be well-informed.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that I am not worried about the minister's economic situation. While he is at it, the minister might as well examine other areas, as we have requested.

Would the Minister of Finance agree with me that, if the income gap narrowed in Quebec, it was thanks to Bill 101 which opened senior management positions up to francophones in Quebec?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): It is quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see also what is happening in New Brunswick, where the gap between anglophones and francophones is rather small.

An hon. member: How small?

Mr. Dupuy: One percentage point. I think that we should also bear in mind that the statistics published were for five provinces. As I said earlier, let us wait and see what the studies will reveal when they are further along before answering.

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[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House leader.

There is further evidence that business as usual in Ottawa is continuing. Only a few months ago the Liberal Party when in opposition complained that the dictatorial Tory regime used its majority to ram controversial legislation through Parliament. How the Liberals did abhor the actions they now casually justify.

Will the government House leader stand and tell this House that the government will never again for the life of this Parliament resort to such undemocratic tactics as closure through time allocation to stifle debate?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I said on behalf of the government it will be found over the life of this Parliament that this government will be using time allocation and closure far less frequently than its predecessor. I challenge the opposition House leader to raise this again after a few years and see if I am right.

Speaking of democracy, I do not know why the hon. member is complaining when the majority of members want to have a decision taken. I thought that was democracy rather than having this place run by the minority in the Reform Party.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, it was my impression that this House was a forum whereby members could have the opportunity of making a case to convince the other side and that is the purpose of this.

In the Liberal red book the government says it will take a series of initiatives to restore confidence in the institutions of government; open government will be the watch word of the Liberal program.

Is the use of closure through time allocation one of the initiatives that will be used to restore confidence? Is this what the House leader calls open government?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member forgets that with his support and the support of the Official Opposition this House passed a major package of parliamentary reform measures. Is he reflecting on his own decision? I doubt he wants to do that.

Furthermore if the member wants to worry about shutting off debate, why is he wasting the time of this House today with repeated quorum calls blanking out the chances of members even of his own party to debate? That is not parliamentary democracy.

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● (1440)

[Translation]

RIGHTS OF FRANCOPHONES

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

According to many experts, the income gap between anglophones and francophones in every province except Quebec is due in large part to the educational difficulties encountered by francophones. This opinion is shared by the Liberal member for Ottawa—Vanier who told the TVA television network yesterday: "We asked for the management of our own schools because it goes hand in hand with regular management. We still do not have it in Ontario after asking for it continuously for 30 years".

Does the minister share the opinion of his Liberal colleague from Ottawa—Vanier and does he recognize that francophones outside Quebec do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as anglophones in Canada and Quebec?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, what I recognize above all is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I recognize the Supreme Court decisions defining these rights. I believe these rights should be enforced and respected. That is precisely why this government recently introduced a Court Challenges Program to help right the wrongs done to those who feel their rights have been violated.