

Supply

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I was here last Friday when the Liberal House leader rose on this issue. At that time, it was agreed that questions of privilege should be discussed in the presence of the members concerned. In this case, the hon. member who was not there on Friday is here today, but I notice that my House leader is not right now. He will be this afternoon.

Let me ask you this: Is it not fair to rule that the members involved should be present when the question is discussed in the House?

[*English*]

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, a very brief point of order to suggest that since in fact this question was first raised by the Liberal Party at a time when our leader was not in the House, surely it is now inappropriate for the Liberals to suggest that a response should not be permitted at the earliest possible opportunity, which is what we are availing ourselves of in this case.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the logic made sense Friday. The logic makes sense today, the logic being that a member who is alleged to have infringed the principles of equity and may have caused harm to another person in this House should be in the House when he or she is being questioned.

I just put it that the House leader of the NDP on Friday, here in this House—I was here—said: “Let’s put this off to another time when all members of the House who are being affected by this point of privilege are here”.

• (1340)

I put it to the NDP: Let’s be fair. The House leader of the Liberals who raised the question accepted on Friday, on the recommendation of the House leader of the NDP, that the whole question be put off until later this week.

For the sake of argument, for logic and for fairness we should maintain that position and wait for the House leader of the Liberal Party to be here to discuss this matter with the leader of the NDP.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am no procedure expert, but the point made by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier seems logical and reasonable to me. Besides, I would have liked to hear the full clarification the hon. member for Yukon had to offer. Under these

circumstances, I am ready to recognize the hon. member for Yukon.

[*English*]

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, certainly it is not a good use of the time of this House to infringe on the time of the Opposition Day of the Liberals who are discussing a very important subject that really does concern Canadians.

Let me simply say, in completing my point of order, that I accept the correction of the deputy leader of the Liberal Party. When I made reference to the fact that the Liberal Party did not accept an amendment we put forward, I was incorrect. In fact that amendment had been ruled out of order by the Speaker.

My point was simply to clarify that, as I said I would do at the earliest possible convenience. That is what I have come to do today.

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SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—THE ECONOMY

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Peterson (p. 18259).

Mr. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the opposition motion to which I am speaking today combines a credible concern with improving the long-term economic health of Canada with a wrong-headed approach to getting the job done.

I sat and listened with great interest to my hon. friend for Willowdale who has been known from time to time to speak out on these issues. He made some pretty blatant statements this morning that everybody was laying off and industries and so on were going to hell in a hand basket, which really is not factually correct. There are industries that are hiring. There are very positive results from the free trade agreement.

One of the things that the opposition failed to recognize was that the free trade agreement is a long-term agreement which goes over a 10-year period. We are well into our third year now of the free trade agreement. We have completed two years of the free trade agreement, and some of the results are very good. We are very pleased with them.