

[Translation]

#### RIGHT TO SPEAK OF BLOC QUEBECOIS MEMBERS

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu):** Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege concerns the right to speak in this House.

According to British parliamentary tradition, there is particular emphasis on the right of opposition members to speak in a debate as important as the one we shall engage in this week. Since Friday, we have been contacting the leaders of the other parties in order to establish our right to speak, to take the floor as members of the Bloc Québécois in this particular debate. After obtaining five agreements in principle, we are now told they no longer exist and that we will not be able to speak today.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to hear from the three Whips why we cannot be allowed 20 minutes speaking time in this debate today and tomorrow, so as to protect the democratic traditions of this House. I would like to know why they cannot give us the right to speak.

[English]

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member and the House that on this most important issue, perhaps the most important issue this Parliament could consider, it is certainly the intent of the government to provide every opportunity for every member who desires an opportunity to speak.

In order to do that within a reasonable time frame we are going to have to work out some arrangements of the types that we have worked out frequently in the past.

I am more than ready to co-operate with any and all members in the House to accomplish that.

[Translation]

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Richelieu has raised a question of privilege concerning the right of opposition members to participate in the debate today and tomorrow, and perhaps beyond that time.

Unfortunately, this is not a situation where the Chair can intervene. The hon. member mentioned—and this seems rather interesting—that there had been a number

#### Government Orders

of discussions about the possibility of having Bloc members take part in the debate, and the government House leader has clearly indicated he intends to co-operate. However, government members, opposition members and the hon. member for Richelieu will probably have to discuss the matter this afternoon, and I hope they will be able to find a solution.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### THE CONSTITUTION

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONSENSUS REPORT

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister)** moved:

That this House acknowledges receipt of the document entitled: "Consensus Report on the Constitution, Charlottetown, August 28, 1992" and notes its appreciation to all those who worked so hard toward its completion.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to put before the House, in both official languages, the document entitled *Consensus Report on the Constitution, Charlottetown, August 28, 1992*.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Mulroney:** The Charlottetown agreement, which I have just tabled, has been approved by the Prime Minister of Canada, the 10 provincial premiers, the leaders of our two territorial governments and the representatives of four aboriginal associations.

It reflects not only a collective expression of common will and purpose but a uniquely Canadian process of pragmatic compromise and compelling vision. These are in themselves powerful recommendations for its acceptance by the Canadian people and its subsequent ratification by the legislative assemblies of the provinces and this Parliament of Canada.

This agreement is the result of the most far-ranging and thorough process of consultation and discussion ever held by a Canadian government, and perhaps by any government, in a modern industrialized state.

Providing leadership in the area of constitutional reform is probably the toughest job in town. The results