

Supply

Mr. Lewis: It is the Opposition that has made the allegation that we are not dealing with legislation. Let us look at the Order Paper. There are nine Bills ahead of Bill C-72 on the Order Paper. There are only three of those on which we have not commenced debate. Just look at the record. We are moving along and passing legislation. To suggest that there is any hesitation or lack of political will by the Government on this particular piece of legislation is nonsense. The record will bear out the fact that we are proceeding on all the items of legislation mentioned in Throne Speeches, as my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier so ably indicated this morning.

We offered to get this legislation into committee and give it detailed study. My hon. friend cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that we are delaying it and then, when we go to him and say that we will proceed with it, say that he does not like the way—

Mr. Gauthier: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Minister just made a statement which is false. He did not offer to have the Bill go into committee. He offered to have it passed in one hour on Friday afternoon with three speakers. If he denies that, Madam Speaker, he is not an honest person. That is what he offered.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. friend may have misunderstood me. It was never a suggestion of mine that it not go to committee. Let us be realistic.

Mr. Gauthier: You offered three speakers, one hour.

Mr. Lewis: Into committee.

Mr. Gauthier: I said no to that.

Mr. Lewis: My hon. friend may have misunderstood me.

Mr. Gauthier: There were witnesses there.

Mr. Lewis: No there weren't.

Mr. Gauthier: Yes there were.

Mr. Lewis: Well, trot them out.

Mr. Gauthier: They happen to be people from your shop and my shop.

Mr. Prud'homme: I don't understand why everybody is so nervous.

Mr. Lewis: Who is nervous?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Chair would appreciate very much if two-way conversations were not held in the middle of debate. It would be very helpful.

Mr. Lewis: Just to repeat it, Madam Speaker, the proposition put to the opposition Parties was that there would be one speaker from each Party and then it would go into committee.

Mr. Boudria: One speaker? That means I don't have the right to speak?

Mr. Lewis: You just spoke.

In any event, Madam Speaker, I repeat the offer. We intend to deal with this legislation whether or not the Opposition puts up a lot of speakers to delay getting it into committee. We are prepared to move this legislation into committee. We are prepared to speak to it. We are prepared to deal with it. We put it on the Order Paper, something which, I would point out, the Hon. Member's Party never did while he was sitting there pushing it to do so.

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just want to be clear, as the Member of Parliament representing the largest number of francophones outside of Quebec anywhere in Canada, that the Minister has just said that under his formula I would not have been permitted to speak on this Bill. I want to confirm that that is in fact the case.

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, I point out to my hon. friend who spent some time in the Ontario Legislature, that we also have a stage called third reading. My hon. friend may want to stick around some day and see third reading at which people speak. The deal was to get it to committee.

I appreciate that there is some unease on that side because we brought forward this legislation. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) was quoted at length, congratulating the Minister for doing it. We want all of that on the record as well. I appreciate his embarrassment on that matter. However, that deals with the legislative aspect. I can assure my hon. friend that we have every intention of proceeding with this legislation and sending it to committee. There will be discussion at second reading, there will be full examination of it at committee and it will be brought forward just as all other legislation we have on the Order Paper has been processed.

• (1650)

Let me take a moment to illustrate what the Government has done under the auspices of Treasury Board to further official languages. We have not spared any effort in the area of language training. During the financial year 1985-86, we conducted an in depth study of the support mechanisms for this official languages policy.

[*Translation*]

The Government language training program was established so that ministers could find the bilingual staff they need to fulfill their responsibilities. This program also allows French or English speaking Canadians a better access to employment in the federal Public Service.

[*English*]

More than 34,000 public servants have received language training since 1974. We have a sizable pool of bilingual employees in the Public Service, which is now large enough