

They have a right to be heard and we want to hear them because that is how the House operates—it debates.

Mr. Charest: Now we know the truth.

Mr. Gauthier: The Minister of State for small things—

Mr. Charest: Cheap, cheap.

Mr. Gauthier: Just as cheap as your remarks. You are an expert in cheapness and you should know that.

[*Translation*]

I say to the Minister who has the floor: Stand up, as a Quebecer, and tell this Government to get moving! Tell it to get moving on official languages as it should, instead of using delaying tactics as it has been doing for at least the past three and a half years!

Mr. Charest: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Minister of State (Youth) (Mr. Charest) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Charest: Madam Speaker, like all other Members of this House, I can only observe that unfortunately the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) has—perhaps he got carried away and used terms he would not normally use but since he took it out on me, I seize this opportunity to point out that he had at least the courage to admit today that until now the Opposition has refused to debate and pass the Bill in the House, and in the same breath he can hardly criticize us as the Government for not introducing the Bill in the House. He can only blame himself and his colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Unfortunately, when words are exchanged between Members from either side of the House without being addressed through the Chair incidents such as the one we are witnessing are a frequent occurrence. I know that both Hon. Members involved in this case are not in the habit of indulging in breaking the rules in this way. We will continue with the comments of the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier).

Mr. Gauthier: Madam Speaker, I am sorry—the Minister arrived a little late for the debate and did not hear what I said. I said during my speech that once, before Christmas, the Government rushed into the Opposition lobby and urged us to put the Bill through quickly, and I said no. It is fundamental legislation that must be debated thoroughly, in a democratic way. I make no apologies about that to anybody, not even the Minister. I think this Bill is very important and Members on both sides of the House want to debate it seriously. There is no question of having only one speaker, after which 19 Conservative Members will rise, as in 1969, to vote against the Bill without giving any explanation or reason why.

I ask the Minister who defended the Government . . . He did not tell the House that the Government would introduce the Bill in the next few days. He did not answer the fundamental

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issue raised in the motion, that is our condemnation of this Government which is unable to bring forward a Bill we consider serious and important. I ask the Minister this: When will the Government bring this legislation forward?

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, I think I should correct some of the allegations that have been made with respect to what has transpired to this point. At the request of my House Leader, I discussed with the Hon. Member the time which might be involved in discussing this matter and the timing of the presentation of the legislation.

Mr. Gauthier: Never.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Perhaps if I refresh the memory of the Hon. Member, at that time he indicated to me—my recollection is subject to his correction—that he thought this would take quite some time. He thought there were at least 25 people in his caucus who were interested in speaking. He thought he could bring that down to perhaps 18 or 17 people. As I recall, he was sitting in the Chamber next to me and I said, as the Hon. Member will recall, that we were interested in proceeding with this legislation because it is an important Bill, but I wanted to find a time.

The Hon Member said that he felt it would not be appropriate for us to call it at the end of the week because many of his Members might be interested in speaking but would be absent. Therefore, he suggested, it might be better for the House Leaders to determine a time at which we could have this debate take place at the beginning of the week and carry on into the week. I have conveyed this information to my House Leader, as I always do, with the idea that he would be in a position to discuss the business of the House.

The whole point I want to make in response to the question is that this is trivial pursuit. This motion is trivial pursuit on the part of the Opposition because they do not have anything serious to talk about.

This is an important issue. For them to trivialize it on the basis of saying, first, that this is the best legislation they could imagine, and second, that they want this to go through quickly, and third, to condemn the Government for not bringing it forward sooner, and then to say that they are going to spend an inordinate period of time discussing this matter and holding it up is hard to believe, and I know the Canadian public will find it hard to believe.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I am encouraged to make a comment at this point, recognizing that what happens at House Leaders' discussions and meetings is not to be necessarily discussed on the floor of the House of Commons. While I do not think that is appropriate, perhaps I could simply say to the Hon. Member, who indicated an interest in proceeding with this legislation, that I believe there is a feeling on all sides that it would be appropriate to take all steps necessary as soon as