

number of members of this House, even if it was made outside the House, constitutes a problem which must be considered immediately by the Chair and by the House.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec's right to self-determination is fundamental. It is a sacred right, and inalienable right and a capital right in the present Constitutional debate. However, that debate must be democratic. Those who believe in it will work democratically and believe in the sovereignty of a Canadian province. That is in no way criminal, nor is it racist or bigot.

I therefore request three things, Mr. Speaker: that the whole of this House immediately denounce the terms used by the member for York South—Weston; that the House immediately demand public apologies from the member and that the House solemnly reaffirm Quebec's right to self-determination.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened rather carefully to the Hon. Member's comments. However, we have a problem today because the Hon. Member for York South—Weston is absent. He is no doubt occupied elsewhere and I think that the Chair, is keeping with our tradition should request the House's permission to now adjourn the matter until such time as arrangements can be made with the other Hon. Member to secure his presence here. For this reason, I ask all Hon. Members to allow the Chair to make arrangements with the Hon. Member for York South—Weston to secure his presence here at a later date. I understand that other Hon. Members wish to deal with this issue, which would certainly be proper, but I would ask them to wait until the Hon. Member for York South—Weston is present.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. The Hon. Member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead clearly referred to a comment which was made outside the House and which has not affected any Hon. Member, either individually or collectively.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: I do not understand. I said that the comment was made outside the House, which is absolutely true.

Mr. Blais: Indirectly!

Mr. Gauthier: No Member of the House has been affected—

Privilege

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: Read again the newspaper articles!

Mr. Gauthier: —either directly or indirectly.

• (1540)

Mr. Speaker: I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, but the point he raised is in fact that on which the House must reach a decision and on which the Speaker must provide a ruling. That is why I would ask all hon. members to allow me to adjourn this matter now, so that the Chairman can have a conversation with the hon. member and agree on how the matter should be pursued. During the debate, of course, all other members will have a chance to make themselves heard.

I see that a number of members would like to speak now. If it is really urgent, perhaps, but—

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I realize that you want the hon. member to be present, but there should not be a delay in terms of weeks or months. I think tomorrow should be the latest.

This man attacked democracy itself by calling those who are considering constitutional options criminals. That is unacceptable!

Mr. Speaker: All right. We have a tradition that is very clear cut, a tradition has been consistently applied for many years, which is to give a member the opportunity to be present when certain charges are made against him. This is an age-old principle which has customarily been applied in this House.

Of course I would need the consent of hon. members, but I would ask you to give the Chairman a chance to make a telephone call and make certain arrangements and secure the presence of the other member.

I don't think there will be a delay in terms of a week, two weeks or a month. I agree this is a very important matter, not only for the hon. member who raised the issue and for other members who have very strong feelings about the matter, but for all members of this House.

That is why I would ask all members to give the Chair a chance to make arrangements immediately, as soon as possible, so that we can pursue this very important matter tomorrow or perhaps Wednesday.