

*Official Languages Act***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-72, an Act respecting the status and use of the official languages of Canada, as reported (with amendments) from a legislative committee.

Mr. Speaker: It may be that Hon. Members may want to return to the matter that we have been discussing a little later. In the meantime, I think it would be appropriate to proceed.

As Hon. Members will know, there have been a great many amendments proposed and presented to the Table. I think I should say that with the number of amendments proposed this has naturally created a very heavy workload for table officers and the Chair. Hon. Members will know, and I am sure will be co-operative in understanding that every effort has been made to deal with this extensive number of amendments in order to allow the Chair to make a ruling at this time which will assist us in dealing with them.

I want to say to Hon. Members, because there has been a constantly changing situation in this matter in that a number of amendments have been withdrawn, that the Chair is reading from a transcript of material prepared earlier today which has been modified by hand throughout the Question Period. It will take some time to read all of it, and I know Hon. Members will co-operate with the Chair when it is understood that changes have been made right up until a few moments ago.

This ruling is with reference to report stage of Bill C-72, an Act respecting the status and use of the official languages of Canada. As of six o'clock p.m. last night, there were 114 motions in amendment on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-72, an Act respecting the status and use of the official languages of Canada. Since last night, 23 motions in amendment have been withdrawn, but I have asked that the original numbering be left in place so as to avoid confusion. Those withdrawn since the Order Paper was printed last night—I will be setting them out, but before I do I want Hon. Members and the public who may be watching this to understand that it is not the Chair's duty nor authority to reject or accept amendments on the basis of their substance. Those rulings have to be made on a procedural basis only.

Second, when we have an extensive number of amendments and the Chair has to make this ruling, it may seem to some Hon. Members or to the public watching that just a lot of figures are being quoted. There may be a natural curiosity as to what each one of these amendments consists of, but it is important that all Hon. Members and the public watching understand that it is not the place of the Chair in this ruling to comment upon, to explain or to try to explain what the substance of these particular amendments might be. This is a

procedural ruling. All Hon. Members will, of course, have access immediately, as these numbers are read out, to what those amendments are and the substance of them. It is important as much as possible that people understand what we are doing in this place at this particular time.

Those motions, or in common parlance, those amendments withdrawn since the Order Paper was printed last night are the following: 1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16A, 17, 18, 20, 20A, 31, 36—

Some Hon. Members: Hold it.

Mr. Speaker: I invite Hon. Members, if I am moving too fast, to indicate that I am, and I have that indication. I will back up a bit. I will continue with 20A, 31, 36, 38, 53, 65, 73, 102A, 109, 117, 124, 132 and 134.

May I proceed?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: A number of motions in amendment to Bill C-72 propose to delete clauses or parts of clauses. In other words, those amendments do not do other than ask that this House, if it gets to vote on these amendments to take parts of the Bill out. Some of these motions, if adopted, might have the effect of altering the principle of the Bill. However, it is a well established practice that such motions, notwithstanding their impact on the principle of the Bill, are allowable at this stage for this is the only method by which Members can debate these clauses.

Again I want it clearly understood by all Hon. Members and the public that I am dealing in procedural terms. I am not dealing, nor am I sitting in judgment on the substantive effect of any amendment. That is for the House to do at the appropriate time. What I am saying here is that we have had a tradition in this House where at this stage of proceedings the Chair will allow amendments that delete in the interests of allowing debate on a substantive matter at the appropriate time. That principle applies to this Bill just as much as it does to any other Bill. As your Speaker I have an obligation to ensure that that procedural principle applies to all Bills no matter what their substance may be.

● (1530)

Consequently, this ruling will deal with Motions Nos. 1A, 2, 2A, 2B, 5 to 8 inclusive, 11, 12, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24A, 25 to 28 inclusive, 28A, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38A, 39, 41 to 45 inclusive, 45A, 46, 47, 49, 52, 59, 60, 61, 70, 72, 74, 76, 79, 80, 84 to 93 inclusive, 95, 96, 96A, 97 to 102 inclusive, 103, 104, 106, 106A, 107 to 110 inclusive, 112, 114, 115, 115A, 120 to 123 inclusive, 125 to 131 inclusive, 133, 135 and 136.

Motions Nos. 1A, 2, 2A and 2B all deal with the purpose of the Act and will be grouped for debate and voted on separately.