

Oral Questions

referendum, how can the Prime Minister explain his attitude and that of the Deputy Prime Minister and of the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs except as a cheap manoeuvre to avoid giving Quebec its due?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Bloc Québécois is totally—

An hon. member: Bankrupt.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Someone said “bankrupt”, but I was going to say “totally confused”. They are so disappointed that we paid.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, can you believe it? Does the Prime Minister admit that by hiding the contents of his conversation with Mr. Mulroney, he lied to this House?

[English]

The Speaker: My colleagues, we know that in the course of debate sometimes some words are used that are not always acceptable.

I would ask the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe if he would not withdraw the statement that the Prime Minister lied in this House. It takes away from the debate when we engage in this type of language. I would ask the hon. member to please rephrase that question and withdraw the words that the Prime Minister lied to the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, in view of all that was said and done in this House, I believe that I would be lying to myself as a member of Parliament and to thousands of Quebecers if I withdrew my words.

[English]

The Speaker: We are going to be faced many times in this House in dealing with facts or the interpretation of facts which are contradictory, and we are going to engage in very vigorous debate. All of us were sent to Parliament to represent very strong opinions.

However, in the nature of Parliament itself, we must take the word of hon. members at face value.

• (1145)

We all have done this as a tradition. If there is an interpretation of facts that are contrary one to the other it does not serve the purpose of Parliament if we use words that are unparliamentary.

I would appeal once again to the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe, who holds as is evident very strong opinions, to withdraw the words “que le premier ministre a menti” and use other words that would be acceptable to Parliament.

I am sure it would help a great deal not only in the course of question period but in the course of debate if we did not resort to this type of word. I would appeal to the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe to reconsider what has been said. If he could do this, we could get on with question period.

Would the hon. member please withdraw the words “que le prime ministre a menti” and replace them perhaps with some other words?

[Translation]

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, as a parliamentarian, I am deeply convinced in my conscience that, in view of all the facts observed and reported in this House, the Prime Minister deliberately misled the House. He lied to this House, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

The Speaker: Dear colleagues, the conduct of a member may only be discussed in the House of Commons by way of a substantive or distinct motion, that is in a self-contained proposal submitted for the approval of the House and drafted in such a way as to be capable of expressing a decision of the House.

Such a motion may contain the abusive accusation that would otherwise be unparliamentary language, but the member cannot do this by using unparliamentary language in this House. The member does have an avenue if he wishes to pursue this avenue, which is a very serious matter.

In the course of debates that we have had and will be having, we always hope we can put forth our very strong views without using language that is unparliamentary. The choice of our words is our weapon. In this sense this is where we are in the arena. We all understand.

I would strongly ask once again if the hon. member would reconsider and withdraw the words “que le prime ministre a menti”.

• (1150)

If the hon. member would do this we could of course proceed as we will with Question Period.

[Translation]

Mr. Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I just said aloud what millions of Quebecers are quietly thinking.

[English]

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, I must express profound regret as your Speaker that I will have to resort to naming one of our colleagues in the House of Commons. It is a very strong sanction that you have put into the hands of your Speaker. In so doing, I would hope that all hon. members would take into grave consideration the great stakes and the great responsibilities which are entrusted to this House.