

Official Languages Act

any alterations or changes are effected to Members' data bases or data processing equipment or software.

[*Translation*]

In addition, a policy statement covering these issues is now being prepared and will be submitted to the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services for discussion, as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

This policy statement is to include not only the procedures and practices to be followed by House staff in relation to their access to and maintenance of computer hardware and software in Members' offices, but also the whole question of the safety and security of computerized data stored in Members' offices. This is an issue of vital importance and one which is to be addressed immediately.

In view of these facts, it would be the Chair's contention that there is no necessity to proceed with a question of privilege at this time.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus) for having raised this very serious issue and assure him, and all Members of this House, that corrective steps have been put in place to ensure that such an occurrence does not take place again.

[*English*]

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in relation to your ruling. I think it is a very important ruling and that it sets out the parameters of the concerns raised by the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan (Mr. Angus). I believe it is important that the committees of the House look into the matter.

I would also hope that in doing so the committees would look at ways of ensuring, when copies are made of Members' disks with names, addresses, and all other information, the privacy of what we have been putting on our disks, that they are kept for Members' use only, and ways of ensuring security in that regard.

Obviously a number of names have been given to us from various sources, some of which are very politically sensitive. We want the guarantee that we will have some security in this area.

● (1120)

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his intervention. I will be very sure that his remarks are passed on within a few minutes to all the appropriate officials.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**MEASURE TO ENACT**

The House resumed from Monday, February 8, consideration of the Motion of Mr. Hnatyshyn that Bill C-72, an Act respecting the status and use of the official languages of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) has the floor.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I understand that I have a few minutes in which to wrap up my remarks.

Yesterday, with regard to this debate on the official languages policy of Canada I was saying that we should be proceeding in a way which builds national consensus. In that context I wish to indicate that my view with regard to the official languages policy of the country is that it is not a policy that should or does confer special privileges on any group but, rather, it is a policy that is designed to remove injustices from Canadian society.

In that connection it is important for people to recognize that the rights which are enunciated in the legislation and which are stated in very broad principles, such as the right to work and the right to service, are limited in their application. I am hoping that that will assuage some of the fears that are being aroused throughout the country in articles about this policy, which are complete and utter distortions of the impact of it.

I also wish to point out that it is better that the debate be carried out more in the nature of a town hall meeting than of a dog fight. It is historic that we have a Conservative Government introducing legislation with regard to official languages policy and that the original sponsor of this legislation, the Liberal Party, is not the only political group in the country that has chosen to approach the notion of official languages in Canada. In this way official languages policy has become a non-partisan question. All three major political Parties have recognized the realities of Canada; they have recognized that we have two major language groups which we call official language groups.

Finally, in the sense that we should have an open and honest debate about this legislation it is critical that the flaws in it be pointed out. I refer to the provisions in the legislation which deal with the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. In that respect the Government is acting in a heavy-handed and ham-fisted way. It ought seriously to entertain amendments at committee. There is no reason why the Yukon should be treated as a federal institution. There is no reason why it should not have the legislative capacity to determine its own