

*Business of the House*

I am most interested in House business. I have several points. I could not get the eye of the Speaker today and I have a whole point on that.

I really want to find out if there is any sense in getting off your seat if you are not on the list in the House. If you are not, then let us face facts. It is now Thursday and usually someone else is in the chair. I will pay my dues and get up for the first or second day. By the time Friday comes there is a new Speaker and that Speaker thinks you are just doing your first baptism. I am a good Baptist but I am getting tired of getting dumped all the time.

On House business, I wonder if the House leader, in the afterglow of Remembrance Day, knowing that there is a unanimous report from the defence committee and in view of the fact that the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka asked a similar question last Friday, I think, to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, could find some way to implement those recommendations for the merchant mariners who are a dying breed rather than procedurally waiting for the 150 days to respond to that unanimous report which is finally addressing one of the last groups that helped defend this country and fought so valiantly and had the highest rate of casualties of any group in the armed services.

Let us do something good and nice and make Canadians feel good. Since we have missed the Remembrance Day period, let us think about the Christmas period and the New Year for those dying merchant marines. There are different figures that one or two die every week because of their age group. The government should respond in a positive way.

Quite frankly we are finding money to do different things. There is a moral element, as the chairman of the defence committee said, about paying for it. Surely the House leader who is a very compassionate person outside the House could appreciate the morality of doing something before this breed becomes extinct. In other words, do not procedurally wait for the 150 days.

I could not get a question to the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs and frankly I had several, so could the House leader please tell this member what the difference in a loaded word is between "referendum" and "distinct society", and where the government is going to change and flip-flop because of the implications

of one and that it is still proceeding gung-ho on the other. Is there any sense in continuing the whole thing anyway?

**Mr. Andre:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of giving veteran status to members of Canada's merchant marine, I know the Minister of Veterans Affairs has said on a number of occasions that he views this as very important. He is working on it.

There is no desire to work to 150 days, but the hon. member will appreciate that these times are different than they were in the early days when we were both here. He was here before me when the question of new spending was a trivial matter because the money was rolling in and our credit rating was still good.

Unfortunately, we are not in that position any more. Where he says that we can find new money, I wish that were true.

The hon. member has a suggestion for some minor savings, but saving a dollar and committing to 10 is not exactly what is going to help. Nevertheless, I will pass on his representation to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

There was a matter of debate as to loaded words and so on. I noticed some snickers earlier when I used the word "plebiscite". I did that because I am an engineer and engineers are very precise in their language.

I happened to look in the Oxford dictionary and "referendum" is a binding decision taken by vote and "plebiscite" is a seeking of opinion.

As you know, there is no ability under our constitution to change it by way of a binding, direct vote because of the amending formula that exists. At best, what you can do is have a plebiscite to seek opinion but cannot be binding. Therefore, it is a plebiscite and not a referendum according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am impressed. It is wonderful to hear from an engineer, especially when you come from a legal background. Calling upon *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* is of great guidance to the Speaker.

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the government House leader on being an engineer and on the fact that they are precise in language.

Many Canadians are probably wondering if they are very precise with regard to cost estimates.