

*Supply*

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Saint-Denis rises on a point of order.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** One is either elegant or one is not. I did not look down on the minister. I only mentioned that the Right Hon. Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) were absent from the House. That does not reflect in any way on the importance of her statement on this very important issue. That is all I meant to say. Just the same, she would have had the opportunity to—

● (1210)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order. I will therefore recognize the Minister of External Relations.

**Mrs. Vézina:** Mr. Speaker, to regret a situation merely means that the situation is not as one would hope—

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Pretty obvious!

**Mrs. Vézina:** Then, to come back to the question put to me—

**Mr. Chrétien:** Where is the Prime Minister?

**Mrs. Vézina:** Unfortunately, I did not examine the amendment because I was delivering my speech and referring to the position which the new government intends to take with respect to the freeze following the discussions this morning. We will consider it and, as soon as this afternoon, we will take whatever steps are needed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister was reading her speech and therefore did not have a chance to hear the amendment. Could she confer with her colleagues and tell us whether the Government would be prepared to support such a clear and concise amendment as has been put forward by the Liberal Party?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vézina:** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this issue is quite important, but it is not such a vital emergency as to make it necessary for us to interrupt our proceedings in order to announce our intentions this afternoon. Let us proceed with the debate, and this very afternoon we will make our intentions known to the Hon. Member.

**Mr. Rossi:** I have a comment, Mr. Speaker. The Minister for External Relations (Mrs. Vézina) has admitted herself that this debate is of extreme importance. How come then that neither the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), nor the Secretary

of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark), nor the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates) are here in this House?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I should remind the Member that it is not our practice in this House to mention specifically the absence of any minister.

**Mr. Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the Hon. Member relates to a basic right. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Orders of the House may prevent the government or the Opposition from raising the same issue twice in the same session. This happens to be one of the major problems now facing this country and which is of great concern to millions of Canadians, churches and all intermediate groups. The point which my colleague is trying to get across to the Minister who is acting as a stand-in today in the House, and the point we want to make is that, in such an important debate, it is unacceptable that neither the Prime Minister, nor the Secretary of State for External Affairs, nor the Minister of National Defence are here to defend the government's position. That is the important point.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I would respectfully remind the Hon. Member that his remarks do not constitute a point of order. I believe the Hon. Member for Bourassa (Mr. Rossi) had made a comment. Would the Minister of External Relations (Mrs. Vézina) like to reply?

**Mrs. Vézina:** I do not really want to defend anyone. It so happens that previous engagements had been made. It happens that . . . I am acting as a representative of my government, and we are prepared to answer all your questions and give consideration to any proceedings related to today's debate. I fail to see the purpose of that interrogation.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** Since the Hon. Minister tells us that she is willing to reply on behalf of the Government, I would like to ask her whether she favours, supports or endorses the five points proposed by the former Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau. First, does she endorse these five major points?

**Mrs. Vézina:** Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members seem to be in a great hurry this morning. In my opinion, as a newly elected Member, I should be the one who has to learn the ways of debate in Parliament, but to my knowledge, any decisions to be made will be taken at the end of the day when a vote will be held if necessary. I therefore do not have to state what is the position of my government before the vote.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps).

[*English*]

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, I understood the Minister to say she was not prepared to take a position on either the amendment or the main motion. If so, then obviously the comments