

Government orders

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Richelieu on a point of order.

Mr. Plamondon: Madam Speaker, I would have appreciated to have been allowed to finish my 20 second argument. You interrupted me after only five seconds, and you made the ruling without hearing what I was going to say.

The whole bill was based on an encouragement to work with Canadian companies and the amendment I have presented is to make coercive the decision the government is going to take on the need to have a Canadian content. It is utterly contradictory to what I have said and to what the government had said.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I interrupted the hon. member for Richelieu, simply because his declaration was denying the Chair the opportunity to rule on the admissibility of the sub-amendment put before the House. The reasons why he originally proposed his amendment are certainly valid, just as much as the reasons for the amendment to the amendment. Nothing will prevent the hon. members, when the amendment to the amendment and then the amendment are put to a vote, from deciding. The decision belongs to the House. At the present time the Chair cannot rule otherwise. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Manicouagan has the floor.

Mr. Plamondon: Point of order, Madam Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Let me tell the hon. member that I would not like him to question the Chair's ruling at this point. The hon. member for Richelieu on a point of order.

Mr. Plamondon: Madam Speaker, you said you had to interrupt me because you said the ruling is yours, and I can understand that. But, after reminding me not to prejudge, that the ruling was not mine, but yours to take, you did not give me the opportunity to put my argument forward before rendering your ruling.

We did speak the same language. We cannot blame it on a bad translation or something like that. Your point is— Any linguist or constitutional expert would tell you, after comparing the texts, that they are complete opposites. And you ask me not to question your ruling, Madam Speaker? I am sorry, but it goes opposite to what I said, it is the antithesis of what I said, and I would call for a division on this.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Madam Speaker, I find most regrettable that an hon. member of this House should challenge a ruling of the Chair. For years now, it has been agreed that a ruling by the Speaker should not be challenged. The ruling in case was made by the Chair. The amendment to the amendment is in order. We are now at debate, Madam Speaker, and I suggest that you proceed accordingly.

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Manicouagan): Madam Speaker, resuming the debate, Bill C-44 authorizes the federal government to contribute financially to the development of the oil field discovered in the Atlantic a few years ago, off Newfoundland. This oil field is known as Hibernia. In June 1990, I sat on the legislative committee which studied section by section Bill C-44, the one that is debated today. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, when appearing before the committee, spoke at length about the benefits to be derived from the project, for the economy as well as the creation of jobs, both in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec.

I readily concluded that it was essential for Canada to gain expertise in the development of our underwater oil resources. We have to look at the situation in Great Britain, in Scandinavia and in Russia to understand how important it is for us, in Canada, to acquire that expertise. Right now, Canada has very little or no expertise in the development of off-shore oil fields. Canada has no choice but to join the group of nations that have acquired the technology to develop those vast off-shore reserves in a cost-efficient way. That is the purpose of Bill C-44.

By joining a consortium of private enterprises that are already involved in the oil sector, the government of Canada makes it possible for the Hibernia project to become reality. Moreover, Canada becomes a partner in the development of new processes and advanced technologies for the extraction of oil from off-shore reserves. Also, the government and the private sector work together to give Eastern Canada state-of-the-art facilities, to allow our engineering firms to acquire the knowledge and expertise they need in the design of supermodules, to give shipbuilders in Eastern Canada an opportunity to join together for the construction of those supermodules and to allow our workers to specialize in trades related to the construction and operation of the necessary equipment.