

Privilege—Mr. Joyal

and see if the documents are in existence, and if so then I can make those available as well.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That being the case, I think the House will realize that for the moment the only basis upon which I could found a question of privilege—and the only basis upon which I have been asked to found any question of privilege—is that the minister made a specific undertaking to produce documents and did not do so. The minister says today that his undertaking was only to make information available. His language is that he will undertake to make information available. In fact, he says that not only did he make that undertaking yesterday but that he provided the information. Further, he says that if it includes documents and if they can be produced, he will endeavour to do so.

If there is a matter to be taken up further in respect of the minister's undertaking to produce documents, the matter can be raised again; but until such time as the matter is explored, it should be set aside on procedural grounds today.

● (1220)

[Translation]

MR. JOYAL—INQUIRY WHY REPORT Tabled IN HOUSE NOT AVAILABLE IN BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Serge Joyal (Hochelaga-Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege following the tabling in the House yesterday afternoon by yourself of an interim report by the Auditor General of Canada on the management of the administrative and financial services of the House. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that report was tabled only in English, contrary to section 3 of the Canadian Official Languages Act which states clearly, and I quote:

3. Subject to this Act, all instruments in writing directed to or intended for the notice of the public, purporting to be made or issued by or under the authority of the Parliament or Government of Canada or any judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative body or Crown corporation established by or pursuant to an Act of the Parliament of Canada, shall be promulgated in both official languages.

I am all the more surprised, Mr. Speaker, that you tabled that report only in English, because for at least five consecutive years the Commissioner of Official Languages has pointed out the difficulty or faults in certain services of Parliament, the Senate or institutions as a whole to which members have access. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that in the context of a renewed federalism, the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) said earlier today in answer to questions in the House—

[English]

—he wants leadership by action and not by words.

[Translation]

He went on to say:

[English]

"I want to remove irritants".

[Translation]

Those are irritants, Mr. Speaker. When members of this House receive a document in only one of the two official

[Mr. Epp.]

languages, they have every reason to complain that after the Official Languages Act has been in effect for 11 years, there is still some way to go. It is not only a matter of making speeches, but of taking action, and I deplore that the President of the Privy Council who spoke following the tabling of that report did not refuse to have it tabled. He sits on the government side and it is his strict responsibility to make sure the spirit and the letter of the Official Languages Act are obeyed with respect to documents tabled in this House.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask you that in the future reports, documents and letters be tabled in the House in both languages and that an order be made for the parliamentary committees to follow exactly the same procedure.

Last week, in the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, the Comptroller General of Canada, Mr. Rogers, who was appearing as witness, tabled a brief in English only. Why should it be that documents are always tabled in English and not the other way around? I would have risen also had that report been tabled in French only. I feel that when all parties in the House support the one policy and the same objectives, it is the duty of the Chair to see that they are respected.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member must understand, I am sure, that yesterday the document was not tabled under Standing Order 41. It was merely a matter of tabling, on a voluntary basis, the correspondence exchanged between the Speaker of the House and the Auditor General, three or four pages in all. That correspondence was exchanged in English. When I write a letter, at times I write in English, at others in French. I am sure the case is the same for most hon. members, and I do not always ask for my correspondence to be translated. I am sure the Auditor General does the same. He sometimes writes in English, sometimes in French, but not always in both languages.

I received a message Tuesday or Wednesday morning, and decided to table it immediately in the House.

If the hon. member means to say that I always have the obligation to translate all the communications I get as Speaker of the House before tabling them, I want him to know that this is an obligation which I do not accept. As to documents and reports tabled in the House pursuant to our Standing Orders, there is an obligation to table them in both official languages. But this is not what I did yesterday. I merely advised the House of a communication I had received. Contrary to what the hon. member indicated, this was not a report.

Yesterday I did not table any document under Standing Order 41(2). I repeat again that the Auditor General is an officer of Parliament, and so is Mr. Yalden, the Commissioner of Official Languages. We are now carrying out a study on the whole procedure of the House and all the administrative practices, and I have invited the Commissioner of Official