

*Speaker's Ruling*

ask hon. members to do the very best they can to co-operate.

I have a further question of privilege from the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

[*Translation*]

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE REFORM BILL

**Mr. Darryl L. Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to Question Period, I would like to ask whether the following is a point of order or a question of privilege.

With respect to Bill C-21 which is now before the Senate, in my riding, the Gaspé, the lower St. Lawrence, the Magdalen Islands and in fact throughout the Maritimes including Newfoundland, people have a problem with the 10 to 14-week requirement.

Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I would like to explain that as a result of unemployment insurance reform, 90 per cent—and the figures can be checked—in other words, the vast majority wants us to change this. We don't necessarily want to be stuck with supporting 10 weeks forever, but we are having a difficult time this year, with the bill being blocked in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you—

**Mr. Speaker:** I am very sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member but this is not a question of privilege and probably not even a point of order. It certainly raises a point against the other place, but a debate on the subject is not appropriate at this time.

The hon. member raised a subject that is of course very important, especially to the hon. member, but there are other ways in which the hon. member and other members who might wish to do so can ask for clarification or make a statement on the issue.

## AGREEMENTS IN THE HOUSE

**Mr. François Gérin (Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the Associate Minister of National Defence tabled a motion under Standing Order 78(3), stating it had been impossible to reach an agreement under Standing Orders 78(1) and (2).

In fact, it was impossible because the minister never got in touch with me, as a member of this House, to find out whether there was some way to reach an agreement.

I maintain that the minister acted against the spirit and the intent of the Standing Orders of this House and that consequently, the Chair should reject the notice out of hand, on the grounds of failure to respect the democratic freedoms of the members of this House, including the member from Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is a very interesting point. However, perhaps the Chair may point out that several months ago, we had the same problem regarding the same Standing Order. I think I would have to say it is not up to the Chair to investigate all deliberations, conversations and meetings that took place among all members before the minister made her statement under the Standing Orders. What we have here is a grievance, not a point of order.

Does the hon. member have another point to raise?

**Mr. Gérin:** Your comments are well taken, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to add a few words and mention the serious problems that exist in the House at this time. As an independent, I have the same rights as any other member in this House. However, since you refuse to recognize our group as such, we are faced with a problem that will resurface every day. I suggest Mr. Speaker, that you—

[*English*]

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member may or may not have a complaint, but if the hon. member has a problem with respect to the House business and it is something over which I have jurisdiction, I would be very pleased to speak with the hon. member. But I think it is important for everyone in the country to realize—everybody who is watching and listening—if we go back over last week, the group from which the hon. member comes was recognized a number of times in Question Period with questions and also on statements. I have made it very clear that with the Speaker, there is a long and noble tradition of our system, that the Speaker must defend the interests of minorities.

Within this Chamber now, there is not just one minority, there are a number of minorities. I have to do