

## Supply

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 82—THE STATUS AND USE OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Gauthier:

That this House condemns the government for its inaction, its lack of political will and its hesitation to accept debate in the House of Commons, at the second reading stage, on Bill C-72 respecting the status and use of the official languages, thus causing a clear setback in the application of the Act by federal departments and agencies, in addition to having detrimental effects on national unity.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** When the House took recess at one o'clock, seven minutes remained in the period for questions and comments after the speech by the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp).

[English]

I will now recognize Hon. Members who wish to continue question and comment period. Resuming debate.

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and participate in the debate today on the motion introduced to the House by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). His motion states:

That this House condemns the Government for its inaction, its lack of political will and its hesitation to accept debate in the House of Commons, at the second reading stage, on Bill C-72, respecting the status and use of the official languages, thus causing a clear setback in the application of the Act by federal departments and agencies, in addition to having detrimental effects on national unity.

That legislation is of great importance to our society because it concerns two communities that have lived together, for the most part in peace and harmony, since 1760. This is a very important and vital issue in our society. We should get on with this question because I sense that the frustrations we saw in the House this morning mostly are due to the poor planning of the Government in bringing this measure to the floor for discussion.

Members of the Standing Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons has spent a tremendous amount of time, effort and considerable creative energy on this important issue, bringing their combined wisdom to bear to put together a very important Bill.

It is nice to stand up on occasion and congratulate the Government for doing a good job. While there are some omissions and areas of the Bill which need improvement, it is a good Bill on the whole. It provides the basis on which to have an exciting and dynamic discussion in the interests of living together in this experiment called Canada.

Many changes have taken place in Canada which have been manifest in good will. As an anglophone from Quebec who has

made a very serious effort to become functionally bilingual, it has been very exciting to meet my francophone colleagues from Quebec who have become functionally bilingual. How many other countries can communicate in two languages?

This is very exciting when one considers that it brings the culture of two great peoples together.

I travelled out West with the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin), who has serious concerns about official bilingualism. Together, we heard concerns expressed in Saskatchewan and Alberta by *Francophones dehors Québec*. We heard from the *Crie d'Alarme* and the need for service. We understood their heartfelt request for services.

I come from an English constituency in Quebec where we have a degree of concern about the application of the official language policy.

This Bill concerns a national issue and reflects the distinctiveness of Canada, which is home to two marvelous cultures and languages. Since we live in respect and harmony with each other, why can we not bring this Bill to the floor of the House of Commons to discuss it rationally? Let us accept and rejoice in these two cultures and promote the vitality of each of those communities.

I am not saying that there are no problems with the Bill, but I am suggesting that the new generation of Canadians throughout this land are preparing to work in both languages and want the respect for their individual languages to be part and parcel of the delivery of services by the federal Government. Let me remind Hon. Members that language is an important therapeutic tool. Therefore, the services delivered by the federal Government, whether through the Canada Assistance Plan or our cost-sharing programs, must respect that language of health and culture.

In his first Throne Speech in November, 1984, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) was full of hope and promises. He said that the linguistic minorities require and should have equality of access and equality of opportunity. In the October 1, 1986, Throne Speech, he said that he wanted to bring us into conformity with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In my view, nothing could be more important than doing just that.

In June, 1987, the three political Parties expressed satisfaction with the tabling of the long awaited legislation. However, a degree of apathy set in. I object to the complaints by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn) when he said there was obstruction; in bringing this Bill forward. Debate on issues of national concern are part and parcel of the obligations of Members from all sides of the House.

However, the control of the agenda in a House with a majority of over 200 belongs to the House Leader of the Conservative Party. He had ample opportunity to bring the Bill forward and ensure that it had the full discussion it merits. This would have allowed us to clarify some of the difficulties within the Bill.