

through my mind just as I was taking my seat. Noting that the *Debates* had not yet been distributed, I felt that I should raise the matter. I am quite willing to wait until our next sitting for a complete answer. That would be fine.

**Hon. Eymard Corbin:** Honourable senators, I have a question for the Chairman of the Internal Economy Committee. We have not yet received the *Debates* for our last sitting, yesterday.

The *Debates* for our previous sitting, the day before yesterday, was distributed only this morning. This delay in printing *Debates* appears to have been caused by a greater than usual number of interventions in French over the last two days. I find this excuse unacceptable in an institution which wraps itself in the *Official Languages Act*. You seem to have an answer which you appear eager to provide. I am all ears.

**Senator Lavoie-Roux:** Honourable senators, the question from Senator Corbin brings back to my mind at least part of the answer given this morning. I think it is true, and it could be verified, that generally speaking 10 to 15 per cent of *Debates* are in French, and 80 to 85 per cent in English. This seems to have created some problems, or at least it is part of the answer.

I agree with Senator Corbin and, as it seems to be a first, in a way, I rejoice that we should be using more French in the Senate that we ever did. If this is part of the problem, we will certainly make sure that we take the necessary steps to correct it.

**Senator Corbin:** Honourable senators, I have another question for the chairman of the Committee on Internal Economy.

Last summer, two students were hired by the Senate administration to do an inventory listing of what we have in our offices. In September, I received a copy of the inventory list for my own office. I am not complaining about the fact that a personal item was on that list, I am complaining about the fact that despite two requests, since September, to the person in charge of that service, the list has still not been corrected. Nothing was done. However, what I object to the most is the fact that I received that inventory in English only. I asked the person responsible—I can give you his name anytime—or, rather, my secretary asked on my behalf that I be provided with an inventory in French with the necessary correction for the item which is my property.

In December, since I had not received an answer, I called this civil servant myself to remind him that there was an *Official Languages Act* which applies to the Senate and all federal institutions, and that I demanded to receive promptly the inventory list in French.

Among other thing, he told me: "Senator Corbin, I think you are being negative." Because I demanded that this document be provided to me in French I was accused of being negative.

I am asking for your advice in your capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Internal Economy. What should I do now, after several months of repeated requests, to ensure that my

rights and privileges as a francophone senator are observed by officials of this institution?

**Senator Lavoie-Roux:** Senator Corbin, I understand your frustrations despite your repeated requests for remedial action which did not materialize. I am also astonished that you, as a member of the Committee on Internal Economy . . . You were present on February 13th . . .

**Senator Corbin:** The agenda was so tight that, unfortunately, I could not have the floor.

**Senator Lavoie-Roux:** Senator Corbin, I think this accusation is entirely frivolous!

I don't think anyone is prevented from speaking at meetings of the Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee or one of its sub-committees.

In any event, I think you could have discussed this matter with me privately. You felt it was appropriate to do so in this Chamber, but suppose tomorrow, a dozen senators rise and start asking me questions about their daily hassles! Well, if you must, you must! I made a note of your request, but I am surprised you decided to raise the matter here, although you never mentioned it to me before.

**Senator Corbin:** After all, you chair the committee!

This is not the first time I mentioned the problems we have as Francophones in the Senate. You promised . . . Let me finish. First of all, this is not a minor hassle. The reason I didn't mention it before is that I am extremely patient.

I wanted to give this person a chance. Obviously, it was a case of bad faith.

Last fall, you promised that the first item on the agenda at the beginning of this year would be the quality of French and English in our official records.

Is this on the Committee's agenda, Senator?

**Senator Lavoie-Roux:** Honourable senators, it is. In fact, I am grateful that Senator Corbin insists on raising the issue of the quality of French or the availability of French versions of certain texts or motions.

I always said I agreed with him. In fact, a request was duly filed with the Clerk of the Committee. The issue is identified as an item that is supposed to appear on the agenda very shortly, I believe.

However, other priorities as well have been indicated by the Budget Sub-Committee or the Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee. I can assure the senator that the matter has certainly not been dropped. He has every right to bring it up again in this Chamber, but I simply wanted to say that I imagine the problem must have existed even before I became chairman of this committee. I hope you will show the same kind of perseverance you did today, but patience, honourable senators!