

Oral Questions

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ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
STATEMENTS BY PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Government. I take it that the Minister of Justice is well informed on languages and I would like to ask it of him.

There are two tragedies in this language dossier. First, a large number of Tory back-benchers should not have been allowed to spew anti-French statements. Second, the Prime Minister has allowed this to happen over the last weeks and months. We were told yesterday by the Government to wait for the vote before any action would be taken to discipline the reactionaries. What nonsense.

● (1420)

Are Tory Members allowed to make racist comments as long as they—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member will put his question.

Mr. Gauthier: We were told yesterday “wait until the vote, you’ll see who is going to be disciplined”. I am asking the Tories and the Government, is the theory that Tory Members can make racist statements as long as they don’t vote on the multicultural Bill—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Member to put his question.

Mr. Gauthier: Are they allowed to insult women as long as they do not vote on affirmative action? When is the Government going to stop this nonsense and take action against those members of the Tory Caucus who are destroying bilingualism across Canada? Can they do that and get away with it by being silent in this House?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the comments coming from that Hon. Member. He was here during the 1970s, as I was, when we saw national unity torn asunder, when we saw province set against province, when we saw region set against region.

When the Right Hon. Prime Minister assumed the leadership of this Party he made it clear from the outset that his primary goal was national reconciliation. From day one, he has worked toward that goal. He has worked toward it with regard

to Meech Lake, he has worked toward it with regard to the official languages policy.

When dissidents in the Hon. Member’s Party voted against the Meech Lake Accord we did not get up and call them racists because we do not believe in using that kind of wording in the House of Commons. We do not believe that this should be a partisan issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

POLITICAL COURAGE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State and Member for Lac-Saint-Jean has said nothing in the language debate, either as a Minister or Member of Parliament or as a Quebecer or Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has told the Conservative Members that they can work to destroy bilingualism throughout Canada as long as they keep quiet in the House of Commons during the vote on the Official Languages Act. That is what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, it is like saying that a liar is only a liar if he is caught or a thief is only a thief if he is caught. What nonsense! The Government must stand up today and tell Canadians, “Enough nonsense.” The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources too. Out with the Parliamentary Secretaries and Members who cannot bear the responsibility to sell a national policy.

When will the Government take its courage in hand and do what it must do?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, the Government’s position on bilingualism is very clear. It is a fundamental policy for the Prime Minister and all members of the Cabinet. I repeat that the Official Languages Bill will be passed tomorrow, with no amendment affecting the fundamental principle of bilingualism in Canada. This is not a partisan issue; this is a substantive matter. And that is the Conservative Party’s position.

[English]

QUERY CONCERNING COURT CHALLENGE PROGRAM

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Calgary North, with the support of the Hon. Member for Athabasca, is planning to launch a court challenge against the Minister of Energy—

Mr. Shields: Not true!

Mr. Gauthier: —and his plans to hire French-speaking Canadians in his Department.

Mr. Shields: That’s a lie.