

I would suggest that the Hon. Member present his proposition or motion again around midnight, and we can at that time better appreciate whether it is pertinent for us to pursue it.

Mr. Gauthier: I would like to participate in this exchange. I gave you a list of Liberal Members of Parliament who would like to speak in this debate. I know and everybody in the House knows that we are getting about an average of three Members to speak per hour. It is impossible for the 12 Liberal Members that I have on the list to be able to speak if we do not shorten our speeches. It is just physically impossible. I would suggest to the Government that they be open and receptive to the recommendation made by the NDP. For the mover and his Party only to get three speakers in a four-hour period seems to me unreasonable. I hope that some compromise could be reached and that we can agree to shorten the speeches to ten minutes. It would allow Members on this side and on the government side to express themselves freely and democratically.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) for his comments. I see that the Hon. Member for Kamloops (Mr. Riis) also wants to make some remarks and perhaps this is a situation where Hon. Members should probably consider having among themselves, and then afterwards. . .

[*English*]

It would be appropriate for Hon. Members to address the Chair if some agreement can be made. I put that forward as a suggestion. I know that while we are negotiating across the floor, which is something we probably should not do too often, it is also taking up time. However, if the Hon. Member for Kamloops wishes to assist the Chair, I certainly recognize him.

Mr. Riis: I appreciate the point. We have heard from the Liberal Party, and its Members are anxious to continue the debate. We have heard the words of the Deputy House Leader that he would like to give it some more thought and consider whether or not we should have an opportunity for all Members to participate. I am prepared to hold back and move this initiative at the appropriate time in the hopes that we will have co-operation from all sides of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

S. O. 52

Mr. Speaker: I reiterate to Hon. Members and to the public watching this debate that the House can do almost anything if it is unanimous.

On the other hand, it is often helpful if Members from all Parties have some discussion among themselves and then bring back the consequences of that discussion to the Speaker. In that regard, I am more than prepared to co-operate.

However, I think that keeping an eye on the time, unless some arrangement is made among Members or unless the order is followed and not objected to, the debate will end at midnight. I think we should proceed. I now have the duty to recognize the Hon. Minister of the Environment.

• (2050)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, we must undoubtedly recognize that the situation which exists now in Alaska is extremely serious. There is no reason for any of us as leaders to shirk our duties in any way, and one of these duties, I respectfully submit to you, Sir, is to view the situation we are faced with in a responsible and sober fashion. To view it in a responsible fashion is to avoid falling in the trap of petty politics. Mr. Speaker, what the Canadian public is expecting from us tonight is to describe the situation as it really is and demonstrate that we are going to fully assume our responsibility with determination no matter the cost.

[*English*]

We all know that Parliament is sometimes a forum given to exaggerated rhetoric and intemperate partisanship. However, the environment is an area of public policy in which neither is appropriate. The stakes are simply too high given the extent to which humanity is undermining the health of our planet. We owe the people of Canada and future generations not rhetoric nor partisanship but a healthy environment in which to live.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, we have heard the usual unfounded complaints and attacks against the Government. It is not possible for anything to occur in environmental matters without the opposition trying to suggest that the Government does not care for the environment. Yet, it has failed to demonstrate. . . Let us review the facts, Mr. Speaker. We have before us quite a number of people who, while sitting as front benchers in previous Govern-