

I want to bring forth four arguments which I hope will convince you, Mr. Speaker, of the importance of the incident and possibly the remedy one could envisage or expect to correct the situation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, there are four points I wish to raise. First, this question of privilege affects all members of this House. I want Friday's opposition day to be instated because by asking for a quorum, the government breached the rights of members in debate, as far as I am concerned. Second, I not only want reinstatement of the first day of our spring supply period, 10 days that we as the opposition, are given under the Standing Orders to consider supply but I also want reinstatement of the votes to which we are entitled during those periods, since we are starting a new period provided by the government.

Mr. Speaker, in my comments I also want to consider the motion to instate the supply proceedings, a motion that, when moved at the beginning of a session, is not debatable but votable. In this case, we would introduce a new order, and I think I have a pretty good case that will convince the hon. member and the Chair to reinstate the votes. Lastly, I intend to put forward arguments regarding the powers of the committees of Parliament, the committees of this House, which at this moment have, or rather had, votes for consideration—the Estimates that were referred to various committees. This afternoon, for instance, a sub-committee on fitness and amateur sport of the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women is supposed to meet at four o'clock. I think it might be better for the committee not to consider the order of reference of this department's Estimates.

What happened Friday? Well, hon. members may have noticed that usually the Order Paper and Notice Paper, under Orders of the Day, contains a heading which reads: "Government Orders—Supply Proceedings. Consideration of the Business of Supply by the President of the Treasury Board".

Friday, Mr. Speaker, was an opposition day—in the course of the year, the opposition has 25 days to consider a question of its own choosing—but under Government Orders. The government gives us 25 days; last Friday was the first day of the spring period. If it had been Monday the 26th, Mr. Speaker, I would have been a lot happier,

Privilege

because in that case, the government would probably have lost a lot more than just the order of reference or the "Consideration of the Business of Supply". They would have lost the very substantial amounts of money they need for government operations. Better luck next time, as they say.

Friday, the House was considering an opposition motion on the environment. I will read it since I seconded it, Mr. Speaker. The motion concerned the environment and "condemned the government for its lack of sincere commitment to the environment and for its vacuous discussion paper which completely fails to offer the concrete action that Canadians would like to see implemented".

I would refer hon. members to the motion itself which was moved by Ms. Copps of Hamilton and seconded by your humble servant.

So, the debate started in the course of the day, as usual, and there were several points of order, which of course prevented members from speaking to the motion. However, late that afternoon, we moved that the House not adjourn at the usual time but continue to debate the motion beyond the normal time of adjournment. This motion was moved by the hon. member for Chambly.

Since there were not 15 members in the House who objected to the motion, it was carried. Mr. Speaker, we practically had a whole day at our disposal, which meant that members could make speeches on this important motion which, as I said before, dealt with the environment.

At 4.30 p.m. or thereabouts, and I refer hon. members to page 1477 of the *Votes and Proceedings* for Friday, March 30, 1990:

The attention of the Speaker having been drawn to the want of a quorum.

That was done by the government whip who, I should think, is intelligent enough to know what he was doing—in fact I know he is intelligent. It may be that working with the new leader, the government House leader, he too has developed a one-track mind about putting an end to the debate and muzzling members.

Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, calling for a quorum meant that members had to be counted. Quorum is at least 20 members, but there were not that many in the House. The bells rang for 15 minutes and still there were only 14 members, Mr. Speaker, including 13 from the