

Language Rights

concerns the provision with respect to the Federal Court of Canada which would entail a tremendous increase of expenditure for its operation if that right or privilege were to be extended across the country.

I wonder if Your Honour would be prepared to deal with that point in a preliminary way?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the point of order raised by the member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). I have heard quite a few arguments in this House in attempts to slow down the discussion and sometimes even the passage of certain pieces of legislation but this is undoubtedly the weakest argument, if one at all, I have heard in the ten years I have been in this House. This seems to me to be merely a tactic to delay the discussion of this bill which is quite worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of every session of Parliament when private members' bills are published or announced, the Speaker of the House of Commons rules on the receivability of the bills from the standpoint of the financial implications they might have for the Crown and when this occurs he usually rejects those bills as a whole. I would like to know if Mr. Speaker did indeed examine the bill we are now discussing this afternoon under Standing Order 94. You may be prepared, Mr. Speaker, to rule immediately on the argument of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton but I do not see how that argument could hold.

The hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) whose argument we have not yet heard, as the hon. member implied earlier, does not add any new provisions to the Official Languages Act but only seeks to amend its application. The financial implications for the Crown that could be contained therein are already in the Official Languages Act. So it seems to me that the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, who is a lawyer, should understand those things.

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, the first comment I should like to make with respect to this point of order is that I think I have to correct something just said by the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin). I believe it is a fact that when Mr. Speaker grants first reading to all bills brought in at the beginning of a session, he does enter a caveat as to the procedural propriety of each individual bill, to be dealt with later. The suggestion of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), therefore, that this bill should now be looked at is certainly in order.

The second thing I want to say is that on the face of it the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton seems to have a point in that it looks as though more money would have to be spent if this amended bill were passed than would be spent if it were not passed. I say on the face of it he seems to have a point, but I have not had the opportunity to look at the act on the statute books. There may be financial provisions in the act that cover this.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

I do not want to spend time now in a procedural argument. I think all of us in this House, in all parties, like to see private members have the opportunity to present their ideas and I would not like the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) to be denied the right to proceed with discussion of this matter this afternoon. I hope we could have the discussion on the merits of the legislation rather than on the procedural point.

I also point out that there have been times when the Chair has had doubts and has allowed discussion to proceed. I would hope the Chair might take that position today.

The other thing I should like to say—and I have checked this and know I am not revealing a secret—is that I understand a member on the government side at some point is going to move that the bill be not now read a second time but that the subject matter be referred to an appropriate standing committee. That would certainly not violate any procedural rule about spending money because sending the subject matter to a committee does not involve spending money. I would therefore hope, Mr. Speaker, that you would be willing and that the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton would be willing that you reserve decision on this point, not ruling it in order or out of order, but, letting us proceed on the understanding that we are simply having a discussion, particularly in the knowledge that there will be a motion to refer the subject matter to committee and thus the discussion be allowed to go ahead.

I think I express the view of all members of the House when I say we have enough trouble around here, and one trouble we do not like is having private members denied the right to present their ideas and have them debated.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, albeit that the hon. member may have a good bill, I happen to be in the position that I presented a bill to the Speaker's legal department which it is alleged—and I disagree—would entail the expenditure of money. There is a disagreement between myself and that department on the point. I am quite surprised that a bill of this nature would come before the House and proceed this far.

● (1722)

I take great exception to this member's bill being presented as a private member's bill and my bill not being presented, apparently because I am an independent. It is outright discrimination and I do not think it is proper at all. It was explained to me by legal counsel who came to my office that the particular bill I wish to present would not be valid, and would not be proper for the exact reasons—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I would like to advise the hon. member that he was recognized on a point of order, namely, the objection to the presentation of this bill. I see no connection between this bill and the one the hon. member had refused to him. I would certainly hear argument as to why this one should not be proceeded with on the point of order which was raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker).