

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 11, 1987

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO TRADE AGREEMENT DOCUMENTS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed that the important documents dealing with the free trade deal have been the object of a lock-up since eight o'clock for members of the media. Members of Parliament were invited to a lock-up on those documents as of ten o'clock. I do not want to raise any hairs on the back of anyone's neck, but I do think Members of Parliament should be entitled to the same courtesy as the media and given access to the same documents at the same time. I appreciate that the media have to write and assess the documents in perhaps a different way but we still have to answer to the Canadian public for those documents.

I ask the Government if there is an explanation why the press was invited to attend this lock-up at eight o'clock this morning and Members of Parliament were invited only at ten o'clock.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, we made every effort to see that Members of Parliament from all Parties were briefed as soon as possible on the documents in question. To be quite frank with you, I would have to investigate the circumstances on other items such as a lock-up on the Estimates or the Budget. I undertake to look into the matter and get back to the House as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) raised this as a question of privilege. It may well not be, but in any event the Hon. Minister of State (Mr. Lewis) has agreed to report back as quickly as he can. I think at least for now the Chair can leave the matter there.

I thank the Hon. Member for raising the issue which, as I say, may not be a question of privilege but is of very great interest to Hon. Members on both sides of the House.

PRIVILEGE

RESIGNATION AS PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

Mr. Ron Stewart (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I am a Conservative, a strong supporter of my Party, my colleagues, my Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and, in general, my Government. I am also unilingual. I represent a riding which is overwhelmingly unilingual Anglophone. I fear my constituents' rights are jeopardized by Bill C-72 and the manner in which it is now written. Therefore, I think it only proper that, with regret, I tender my resignation as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Supply and Services.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has risen on what I think would be more properly referred to as a point of individual privilege. It has been customary in the past on such occasions to hear an Hon. Member under those circumstances. The Hon. Member has made his statement. I do not think there is any need to carry the question of privilege any further.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Doug Lewis (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the Bill C-88, an Act to amend the Judges Act, as reported (without amendment) from a legislative committee, be concurred in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Lewis (for the Minister of Justice) moved that the Bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Richard Grisé (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few short remarks on the occasion of the third reading of this important piece of legislation.