

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, we call our rules; Standing Orders. Canadian parliamentary law began, of course, in 1867 and, in the last 124 years,—

[*English*]

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, point of order. My colleague and friend from Saint-Léonard has just given a good speech. I understand the haste of the minister for youth to make his maiden speech in the Chamber, but I wonder if he could just relent for a moment because we did not get an opportunity to put some questions to my friend from Saint-Léonard. I understood the minister was rising on questions. Could we revert?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes, is there unanimous consent to revert to questions and comments? I did ask whether there was questions and comments. Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to commend my colleague from Montreal on his excellent submissions to the House. I would hope that his submissions will serve to convince hon. colleagues opposite of the unfortunate nature of the proposals that are before the House today.

I note that the hon. member for Saint-Léonard was elected to this House six and a half years ago in the general election of 1984. I also was first elected in that general election. The House will note that this hon. member has been a very active participant in the debates in this House, and in fact in all the workings of Parliament Hill.

Could the member indicate in his now lengthy experience in this House whether he believes that the present number of sitting days are adequate. Could he also tell me whether this Chamber itself is relevant to the workings of our parliamentary democracy? Could he advise the House whether in his personal view the people of Canada will accept the government's proposal that might suggest to some that members of Parliament are seeking to have one week's holiday for every three weeks worked. That is the concern among some of my constituents, that is the perception out there. Would the hon. member not agree with me that when this Chamber is not sitting, there is a perception out there in the public

that members of Parliament are on holidays? Does any of his constituents share that particular concern?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his generous words. My constituents in Saint-Léonard elected me for the second time in 1988. They elected me to come to this place to fight for their rights and to represent them. We see the situation that the country is in today. This country is on the verge of breaking up. We see thousands and thousands of not only Saint-Léonard constituents but Montrealers and Quebecers and Canadians all across the land are losing their jobs every day, businesses are closing, people are fed up the way the system is run.

Here this week, after taking an Easter break of 10 days—and I wonder how many Canadians take 10 days' break because of Easter—what are we debating? We are not debating how we are going to solve the crisis of how we are going to keep this country together. We are not debating how we are going to find jobs for Canadians who are losing jobs, or children that are starving. We are debating that we need 40 days extra to go to our ridings. That is what the government says, but I am wondering whether we will go to our ridings to listen to Canadians or try to take some days off or even try to sell some policy of the government that are not saleable.

That is what my constituents tell me. That is the message I tried to deliver in the 20 minutes I spoke. If we have enough time, I will make the point that the actual calendar, which is about 175 days, the government claims that we need a week a month to go to our ridings. We could have followed the actual calendar. We came back on February 25. What happened to the three weeks we were supposed to sit in January? We came back because of the war. Then we declared war and we went back home. On February 25 we had the budget. We had a couple of weeks of debate. Now we are debating because we want to go home and maybe we are going to come back in the middle of May.

How many Canadian workers have all this time off? We have all sorts of tools to help us in our work, for example, telephone calls, television, householders. We have a budget of over \$150,000 to hire people to answer all of the problems that we have in the riding. We are elected to be in this place to present the legislation and solutions to have people working, to have a better place for our children and our grandchildren and keep this country together.