

That has been done many times in the past. I think that would clear the air and resolve the situation in terms of the impasse we are in right now.

Mr. Thompson: Madam Speaker, when the question was put, I think that most members in the House recognized that the members of the party who are objecting to the decision basically fell asleep at the switch. It was very clear on this side of the House that the Chair made the right decision. We support the decision made by the Chair. There is no question at all, Madam Speaker, in that regard.

Mr. Breugh: Madam Speaker, I want to try to put this with the complete understanding of someone who has occupied a position in the chair in another chamber of how awkward things can get at any given moment.

I am one who said no. I did not yell it, I did not scream it, but I did clearly and with some colleagues in this corner of the Chamber say no. The Chair, it was fairly obvious to me, did not hear me, nor perhaps did the table officers. I stood in my place to make the Chair aware that I had voted no to the motion. The Chair did not see me. I understand that. This is a big Chamber. I repeatedly stood in my place to try to make the Chair and the table officers aware that I had in fact said no to that particular motion.

• (1105)

Forgive me, but from where I am at this far end of the Chamber it seemed like this one lonely member was being ignored. It is not a big deal, but it is quite offensive for us at this end of the Chamber to have voted no to a motion, to have attempted to be recognized quietly without any furore and be ignored. I would plead with you in all fairness to simply put the question and allow our votes to be heard.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hope the Chair does not have the impression any of us enjoy what is happening here this morning.

We are here to oppose the government and the legislation the government is trying to bring before the House. We assumed a certain amount of goodwill when we moved the motion on concurrence that at some point the government would get up and move to go to Orders of the Day and there would be a vote.

Government Orders

We said no. There are people here who said no, but they did not yell no because they did not yell in the expectation that the Speaker would recognize that and move to have the vote, but people did say no.

Madam Speaker, I plead with you in the name of the Chair. It is a pointless dispute. It creates the perception, albeit I am sure unfounded, that the Chair is favouring the government in this respect.

All you have to do is call the vote. The government will win because it has the numbers. Then we can proceed to do what the government wants to do. We want the House to divide on this and the Chair's responsibility in this case is to permit the House to divide on this.

A week or so ago, we tried to have unanimous consent and the Chair ruled that a nod of the head was enough to deny a unanimous motion. Here we have members saying no, getting up and testifying to the fact they said no and the Speaker refusing to put the motion.

I plead with the Chair so the fight is not between the Chair and certain elements of the House, but continues to be between the government and the opposition on the North American free trade agreement to put the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Tardif: Madam Speaker, I would simply like to give my perspective on what is happening now in the House.

I remember that once, when I was dealing with a specific matter here in the House, the same thing happened to me. In a discussion with the Chair and the officers at the table it was explained to me that this was not a matter that could be tabled again. Once the question is put and the answer is heard, we must accept that decision.

Just because I am a member of the government, as I was at the time, there is no reason I should be treated differently.

An hon. member: It is a completely different matter here.

Mrs. Tardif: The circumstances were identical. I had said no and other members had said no, and the same decision was applied.