

However, the hon. member and other members of this House can be absolutely assured that the vital interests of Canada including the vital interests of the Canadian dairy industry are very much in my mind and very much on the front of the table.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

• (1510)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

MEMBERS' RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Allow me first of all to convey my respects and my congratulations to you on your election. For reasons that I will not mention, I was not in the House at the time when you were elected to this office. Needless to say, I am proud to extend to you, on behalf of the Conservative caucus in this House, our support and, above all, to wish you all the best for the coming Parliament.

I have chosen and asked to speak today on an issue which will impact on our rights and privileges during this Parliament. Part of yesterday's Throne Speech reads as follows:

The Government is committed to enhancing the credibility of Parliament. Changes will be proposed to the rules of the House of Commons to provide Members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my caucus and my Party, let me tell all the members of this House that we fully endorse such a statement and that we intend to support the government in this regard.

[English]

In respect to the statement made by the government in the speech from the throne, I want to take advantage of the fact that on the very first day that we sit we have very deep and very real preoccupations relating to our rights and privileges in this House.

I am rising on a point of order today not because I am asking for a ruling from the House, but I want to attract your attention, Mr. Speaker, and the attention of members to a few facts relating to our position on this side.

Even though the election campaign rendered a result that was quite clear in regard to the previous government, the results, if examined objectively for what they yielded for us on an electoral basis, were such that the Reform Party that sits with us in this

Point of Order

House obtained approximately 19 per cent of the vote and has a representation of 52 members.

The Official Opposition with 14 per cent of the vote has 54 members. The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada with 16 per cent of the vote has only two members. Our colleagues in the New Democratic Party, who I think have approximately 9 per cent of the vote, have nine members.

This, Mr. Speaker, as you know, creates a situation where—

The Speaker: The Chair would be disposed at this point to ask the hon. member to come to the point. I would very much like to hear it. I will then take other points of order. I would very much like to hear the end of this point of order if I could.

Mr. Charest: If I may be allowed to finish what I have to say.

The point that I want to make today is that as the leader of my own party I intend to bring this matter forward to you first, Mr. Speaker, on an informal basis and with the other political parties in this House so that we can discuss what opportunities there will be for us in this House of Commons in respect to the statement made in the speech from the throne, in respect to the statements already made by our friends in the Reform Party or our friends in the Bloc Québécois in regard to the opportunities that we will have to speak on behalf of the two million Canadians who offered us their support in the last election campaign.

That is the point that I wanted to make on this day so that at the very first opportunity when this House sits and when question period is happening you know, Mr. Speaker, and all members of this House know that we intend to argue this point and at least have the opportunity to be heard. This is so that we can deal with such matters as my hon. colleague and friend from Saint John sitting at one end of the aisle and I am sitting at the other end.

Furthermore, if I may, I have a question of privilege.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member has made his point and I look forward to discussions with all hon. members in this House. The point is well taken and I do thank you for your intervention.

Is this on the same point of order or have you terminated?

Mr. Charest: No, I have a point of privilege.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I have made the ruling on the point of order. Is this a point of privilege sir?

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, it is but I understand that my colleague from the Reform Party also has a point of order on the same subject I have just broached. I would be more than willing to enable him to say what he has to say and follow that up with a different point of privilege.