

*Continental Shelf Boundary*

[Translation]

**Mr. J.-J. Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I am eager to take part in this debate because, as you all know, I represent a constituency where water is predominant. Indeed everyone knows that lake Nipissing is not as big as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but in any case we know what a coast is. However, this is not what I want to talk about.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the topic and proper response to the subject matter and merit of the remarks of the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall) will be handled by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Baker), as well as by the hon. member for Saint John-Lancaster (Mr. Landers). My comments will be directed basically to the procedural aspects of this particular motion.

It is regrettable that in effect these debates on notices of motions for the production of papers tend to be rather academic, in the sense that we do not deal with the merits of the notice of motion for the production itself but, basically, with the subject matter which motivated the member to present the motion in the first place. Effectively, we ignore and do not give sufficient importance to this particular procedure which becomes more and more essential to the proper functioning of this House and the role each member plays as an individual and as a private member.

This particular procedure was intended to involve debate on whether certain documents ought to be presented to this House and ought to be produced by the government. What has taken place in the past is that certain documents have been requested of the government, and upon these particular documents not being produced the motion has been transferred for debate before this House at a given time, namely, private members' business.

Effectively, what has developed is exactly what is taking place today. The hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe is presenting a matter that is very close to his heart and to the heart of his constituents. He debates that particular subject matter and does not at all seek to obtain production of the documents in the full knowledge that they will not be produced. He does not attempt to persuade the members of this House that the documents in fact ought to be produced, because he recognizes full well that the documents he seeks to have produced do not fit into any of the categories that are internationally recognized as being documents producible by governments.

The hon. member is seeking to have produced telegrams, letters and communications which reside within the realm of external affairs and exchanges between governments. It has been recognized by legislation passed in the United States and Sweden that that sort of material is privileged and ought not, in the public interest, be produced. We note from the remarks of the hon. member that he did not seek the production of those documents because he effectively recognizes this.

**Mr. Marshall:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member evidently was not listening. I was giving the background to the reasons I wanted the papers produced, so that we would have the whole picture and could decide

[Mr. Marshall.]

on the importance of having those papers produced. The hon. member may say I was only trying to bring up this topic because of my interest in it, but he is only taking up the time of the House unnecessarily.

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, I was about to indicate that last week I had occasion to be in England and take part in a seminar on the question of freedom of information. The question of the production of documents was one of the matters discussed at that particular conference, and I felt this was a singular opportunity to indicate to the members of the House what my personal views are with regard to this particular procedure and to express, as well, my regret that the initial purpose of this procedure has been somewhat diverted. It has somehow not been dealt with in the way initially intended. I simply wish to indicate that the committee on statutory instruments presently is studying the matter of freedom of information.

● (1720)

Sufficient time is not being devoted to this issue by the House, nor are members of parliament being urged sufficiently to pay more attention to what is happening in that particular committee to make sure that the recommendations forthcoming from the committee relating to freedom of information will include a transformation of this procedure so that it becomes meaningful, and so that it becomes one where the effect of the motion that is presented is to seek, bona fide, the production of documents and not to present requests for documents knowing full well that they cannot be produced in the national interest, and not to seek, as the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe has attempted to do, to transform Canada into an acquisitive nation attempting to take over territory that has been recognized in international relations as being foreign. I suggest to him that perhaps more time should be spent more constructively in dealing with these matters by discussing the merits of the whole procedure with which we are presently engaged.

[Translation]

**Miss Monique Bégin (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with enormous interest to the comments made by my colleague from Nipissing (Mr. Blais), who just came back from a seminar on motions for the production of papers, and he has said ten times better than I would have been able to what precisely concerns me, for this motion No. 70 which we are now debating is only one of those presented by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall).

Before coming to the discussion of the production of papers, rather than of the beautiful province of Newfoundland, the treaties of the Union or the heartfelt speech which the hon. member made in support of our efforts and concern for the well-being first of Canadians and second of our human brothers, which have been described at the Law of the Sea Conference by all our ministers, and especially those from eastern Canada, I want to tell him how much I sympathize with his motion, unless he meant it as a joke, to the effect that another province of Canada should become in majority French-speaking. This will indeed enable me, in the future, to pronounce the name of his constituency in French, "Sainte-Barbe", which was the