

Mr. Prud'homme: It did.

Mr. Gauthier: It is not always easy, but things did move. Finally, after many years and many committee meetings, the Government has brought forth a bill which I feel is good, because it reflects what we have been seeking for quite a long time, and I now ask the Government to make a special effort to bring this bill to the House, a bill which we will adopt quickly because it is good.

M. Boudria: Madam Speaker, I would also like to contribute to the discussion and put a question to my Hon. colleague for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) while commending him for his excellent speech. Certainly, Madam Speaker, all Members in this House would like the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier to be commended not only for his speech but also for his great commitment to the area of official languages.

Here is my question to Hon. Member. Does he believe it is by coincidence that in June 1987 a bill was tabled in this House and immediately thereafter there was a provincial election in Ontario; that during that election the Conservative party fought bilingualism, and that just after the election and the situation in which the Ontario Conservatives found themselves with the support, dare I say, of some federal Conservative MPs, this Conservative Government chose to shelve, for all practical purposes, its good piece of a legislation, and I recognize it was good. And may I recall that some Conservative MPs from Ontario also made representations against Bill C-72. Does the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier feel that series of events was pure coincidence, remembering the position taken by Mr. Grossman during the provincial elections in Ontario?

Mr. Gauthier: Very briefly, Madam Speaker, I have no crystal ball. I could not say what went through the heads of those politicians, both federal and provincial, but it was passing strange that the legislation we had been expecting last winter, that was promised in 1986, was tabled on June 25, just before the summer recess, and since that time there has been no mention of it. Did that contribute to the election of a Liberal Government in Ontario? This I do not know, but I would hope so, because it has shown the Liberals, as straight-thinking people, want to support that cause and are ready to do so with all their hearts and energies.

Mr. Prud'homme: Madam Speaker, in answer to the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Grisé), I would like to suggest that during my 25 years in political life here in Ottawa and as a student at the University of Ottawa, since credit must be given where credit is due, I never met a greater champion of Francophones outside Quebec than the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier). I would like to point out that I got to know the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier when I received from the *Association canadienne-française d'éducation*... I know that the Hon. Member represents a Quebec constituency, but I am speaking about a champion of francophones outside Quebec. I got to know him in 1957 when I was

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given some award—I do not really want to speak about myself, but about the Hon. Member—at Ottawa University by the *Association canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario*. At the time, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier was already known in francophone circles outside Quebec as the great champion and defender of francophones. I say this with a lot of friendship for my English-speaking friends. There are great defenders of Quebec anglophones in Quebec. That is quite normal. However, if someone is going to ask where we were when things were not going well, I shall have to attest to the extraordinary efforts made by the Hon. Member, to his tenacity and his loyalty to his own culture, and to the fact that he never tried to take anything away from the culture and pride of others. This is the important point. This has always been the motivation of the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier, and I would be remiss in my duty if I did not take this opportunity to reflect upon the history of francophones outside Quebec and pay the Hon. Member a very simple and humble homage by saying that he has no lesson to receive from anyone when it comes to his determination to promote the rights of francophones.

• (1150)

[English]

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I feel some ambivalence about entering into this debate on this particular motion. I say that because the motion indicates the desire of the Official Opposition to proceed with the discussion of a Government Bill. The fact is that we are in the unusual situation today of having the Opposition say that this Bill finally achieves a proper legislative approach to official languages in Canada, something the Liberal Party failed to do in 19 years. This Bill really is a testament to the failure of the leadership of the Liberal Party in matters of language in Canada.

This is one of those Opposition motions which ostensibly is critical of the Government but, after reading it, is found to be an absolute condemnation of the Liberal Party's position and the lack of present leadership on this issue.

Before I get into the text of my speech, I would like to point out why we are now debating this matter today on an Opposition motion. I heard the speech by the Hon. Member, for whom I have the greatest of respect. I do not say these things to cast any reflections on his motives, and the Hon. Member knows that. However, I ask the Hon. Member and members of the Liberal Party of Canada why, if in fact this is a matter of such great urgency for them, their House Leader has never, as I understand it, asked that this matter be brought forward. Is this some sort of conversion or has the Hon. Member for Ottawa Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) now assumed the role of the House Leader of the Liberal Party?

When I discussed the matter of dealing with this Bill on the agenda we had this fall, although the Hon. Member tells me that he wanted to get this Bill through, he said that he thought he would be able to get by with 25 speakers from his Party.