

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 19, 1990

The House met at 1 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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[English]

### PRIVILEGE

#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in the debate on government motion No. 2 on language rights in Canada, I was denied the opportunity to participate. Since I was not recognized, the question was put to the House. Other members missed the opportunity to debate as well. In other words, the debate collapsed.

If you look at *Hansard*, page 8414, you will find the following:

The Acting Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Caccia: No.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry but I cannot recognize the hon. member. He is not properly dressed.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the motion was subsequently carried without further debate.

My question of privilege today is the fact that I was not recognized for such debate. Might I add that my question of privilege is rooted on one basic question: Is our parliamentary institution well served when dress is more important than debate? In other words, is a tie more important than a message?

Mr. Speaker, under your leadership we have made great progress one step at a time. A balance has been struck between the individual rights of members in this Chamber and collective rights of the House so as to make this institution function and carry out the nation's business. We all appreciate that fact.

In the realm of individual rights, women in this Chamber can dress in a variety of ways according to

fashion and changing trends. I am glad of that fact and support it. The question now is whether the same flexibility can be extended for men as well. In making the case for modernizing the dress code for male members, may I quote the Deputy Speaker from page 6908 of *Hansard* of December 14, 1989, when he said:

I think most members are aware of the way members should dress in the House. It is stated quite clearly in Beauschene's that the dress of members should be conservative, contemporary dress. That is the rule.

He added:

It does happen, when we have votes, that members may come in at the last second and may not technically fit the criteria set out in Beauschene's. It is for that reason that in the past we have allowed those members their voting privileges. However, if the time came for the member to speak in the House then the decision of the Chair could be different.

Clearly the Deputy Speaker with his ruling left the door wide open, I submit. You will also find that last Thursday, at page 8399 of *Hansard*, the government house leader stated that debate on government motion No. 2 would continue for several days. Because of his assurance several members of the House, myself included, were taken rather by surprise when no member in the customary round of speakers rose to continue debate following the conclusion of the first round.

• (1310)

Therefore, at the last second I had to rise in order for debate to continue. My situation was therefore comparable to the one the Deputy Speaker described last December. Might I stress, Mr. Speaker, before concluding, that the only rule of the House that refers to members appearance is Standing Order 17. It states:

Every member desiring to speak is to rise in his or her place, uncovered, and address the Speaker.

I conformed with such rule last Thursday. While it is true Beauschene's is often quoted in the matter of member's dress, I think it is important to remember that Beauschene is an interpretation of the rules, not the rule itself. The rules of the House are set out in the Standing Orders and I fully complied with Standing Order 17.