

Government Orders

I honestly believe that is why the trustability and the popularity of politicians generically as a profession in this country is lower than that for convicted assassins.

Mr. Gustafson: Just one comment, Mr. Speaker.

Again the hon. member is speaking about something that he does not understand. The Alameda dam in a run-off last fall filled up with water. They could boat there last fall, lots of boating. The water was several metres deep. It was unbelievable the amount of run-off that came down that dam. They were boating and they will be boating again this summer.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, the member likes to pose questions and that is fine, but it seems to me that if one is ethical about these kinds of issues one would take the time to respond to the point that I had raised, the continued flagrant violation of the law.

We pass laws in here and we expect Canadians, one and all, to live up to those laws. However, when those laws apply to this particular Conservative government, in almost every province, in almost every jurisdiction, on environmental issues, and I predict it will be the same, if not worse with C-13 when it is law, the flagrant abuse of the rights of Canadians and of the ecological integrity of this country will continue unabashed because of behaviour and attitudes such as that just exposed by the member who just asked the question.

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this very important debate.

I want to begin this address with some introductory remarks, putting this debate in context.

As the House is aware, this debate comes at a time which is bridging my responsibilities on the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee and now resuming my responsibilities as associate critic for international environment. It is in that context that I want to begin.

As we have heard, the Minister of the Environment is not able to be here today and yet this is the most important environmental legislation to be introduced in this House in many, many years. I find it very sad that he is not able to be here. Allegedly the reason for his absence is his attendance at the Conference of Ministers

of the Environment in Vancouver, which is occurring this afternoon and tomorrow.

I remind the people who are watching that this government, of which the minister is a part, has the ability to call bills at its convenience. It has control over the timing of the legislative agenda, not us. So I think a House leader's role is behind the scenes because the real reason the Minister of the Environment is not here is because this has become a political football in Quebec and he is a Quebec minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Pronovost: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made three remarks in 60 seconds on the absence from the House of another member or a minister. Everybody knows that ministers and members have numerous occupations outside this House. It is out of order and quite contrary to our rules that experienced members repeat this kind of comment two or three times in just a few seconds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It is true that our Standing Orders forbid comments on the presence or absence of other members in this House.

[English]

Mr. Taylor: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I note that in this practice we are simply following the lead taken by the parliamentary secretary who, at the beginning of the debate at third reading, indicated the absence of the Minister of the Environment during the debate and expressed the apologies of the minister to the House for not being able to be present.

We are simply following up on the comments that were brought to the attention of the House by the—

Some hon. members: No, no.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I request the co-operation of members on both sides of the House. I think both points have been heard and we could go back to the substance of the debate.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has the floor.