

Business of the House

understanding because even if everybody does not participate, sitting and listening to the debate they have a better understanding of what is going on. It aids in the understanding of the intent and purposes and so on. So I am favourably disposed toward that sort of approach and look forward to conversations to implement that.

Again, I get back to the original motivation and my motivation in talking to the opposition parties in respect of this legislation. I believe that the country is best served when the parties in this House, which hope, want and are working for a united Canada, will be in agreement and certainly in terms of process, maybe not every detail of it, but in general agreement on process. When that occurs we can make all kinds of changes as the hon. member knows and that is what we are striving for.

I can give the member the assurances that whatever improvements are possible they will certainly be considered and we will find a way to implement them.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to belabour these points, but repeatedly the government House leader has risen in his place—and I wish to reserve the right to check the record—but I would suggest that this perhaps might be a point of privilege in terms of the way in which he attributes the motive of myself and perhaps to a certain extent, my colleague from the New Democratic Party, with regard to the so-called consultations that he believes have taken place.

In law, Mr. Speaker, there is such a thing as an innocent mistake. Perhaps the hon. House leader is having an innocent mistake but there was no such thing as consultation. Let us be clear. Let us be candid and frank with one another. What took place was a briefing of individuals and we were told what was contained in the bill.

I say this with respect. The hon. government House leader has requested that the hon. member be patient. Well, I think the hon. member and all hon. members in this House have been very patient.

We have been waiting since May 13, 1991 when the throne speech was delivered in this House wherein enabling legislation was mentioned. We are being very patient with the government House leader. I would hope that he would not continue with this continuous refer-

ence of attributing motives to members of Parliament which is inaccurate. His memory is extremely selective when it comes to discussions which we have had, both privately and publicly.

• (1510)

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member I do not think we should be prolonging this. It is just further evidence of what I was trying to avoid by having the private conversations.

The three meetings with the hon. member present where we discussed the contents of the bill, plus one where there were representatives from his leader's office, were for the purpose of informing the members what was in the bill and seeking feedback.

Surely, it is obvious to anybody that if it is just one-way transmittal, one meeting will do. If there are three meetings, what is the purpose of the other two? To hear suggestions and so on and so forth. That notwithstanding, the reality is that the hon. member and his party had the opportunity through those three meetings to pass on suggestions for improvements. That did not happen.

I have not received any recommendations beyond the general ones that we discussed privately. Those are the same issues that have been discussed in Question Period, spending limits and so on. I explained in private as I have explained in public the constraints of the charter of rights in terms of having umbrella committees and restricting people to participation and so on. It was in that context.

I did not say that the hon. member suggested that I attributed motives. I am simply relating what happened. We had three meetings on the subject, one with officials. The subject matter has been on the floor of the House for the last two days and one day last week. I am simply making the observation which I hope people will understand when I get accused in the future of not discussing with the opposition some of the government plans, where my motivation is coming from.

I thought that would be a tool for smoothing things. It turned out to work in the opposite way. That is not to ascribe motives; it is simply to describe what happened. Like any reasonable person, I learn from experience.