

Privilege

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LA SALLE—DECISION TO SIT AS INDEPENDENT MEMBER

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

For three years, I have believed that I could, at the same time, serve a political party and the interests of the province of Quebec. Today, I must bow to the facts and recognize that it is impossible to carry out those two objectives simultaneously.

As I am still interested in finding a viable formula for Quebec within the Canadian Confederation, I have decided to continue to work in co-operation with the other hon. members, and I reiterate my intention to sit, from the time the Chair recognizes my right to do so, under the label of an "independent".

Finally, I wish to thank the Chair for its many kindnesses to me and to express the hope that it will deem it reasonable to let me take the floor as often as it has done so previously.

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a correction to yesterday's *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This correction should be made on motions.

[English]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT**

TABLING OF REPORT OF BILINGUAL DISTRICTS ADVISORY BOARD

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in conformity with the Official Languages Act I wish to table under Standing Order 41(2) the Bilingual Districts Advisory Board Report, the recommendations of which will be given careful consideration by the government.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**OIL**

PROPOSED TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE SYSTEM—DETERMINATION OF EXTENT OF POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO WEST COAST AREAS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the report in the press, attributed to the leader of the delegation of Canadian officials to Washington, that the officials have been unable to ascertain how much oil would be moved from Alaska or where it will be moved, I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister where the government of Canada

[Mr. Stanfield.]

intends to go from here with regard to that question and whether there is any plan to determine the extent of the possible danger or damage to west coast areas, particularly the area inside the Strait of Juan de Fuca?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have a report I would be prepared to give the House on the discussions that took place yesterday which would help answer the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. I would be prepared to revert to motions if that is the wish of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed that we return to motions to allow the minister to make a statement?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**OIL**

PROPOSED TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE SYSTEM—REPORT ON WASHINGTON MEETING OF UNITED STATES AND CANADIAN OFFICIALS

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the consultations in Washington yesterday enabled officials of the two countries to examine risks of pollution which would be entailed by the movement of large volumes of oil from Valdez, Alaska to the Pacific northwest. The Canadian delegation made clear the very serious concern of the Canadian government regarding the substantial damages which would result from a major oil spill. The Canadian delegation also raised questions regarding compensation and damages in the event of a massive spill, basing its position on the Trail Smelter decision which provides a firm legal precedent for compensation in the event of damages in Canada resulting from an oil spill in United States or international waters. The principal Canadian concern, however, is not for compensation after the event but to see that oil spills shall not take place. The Canadian delegation pressed the point that, whatever precautions might be taken, oil accidents are likely to occur as was recently shown in the spill of diesel fuel in Puget Sound and in the collision of two tankers in San Francisco Bay.

The Canadian delegation stressed the high cost of cleaning beaches, fishing gear, pleasure craft and the loss entailed from oil-fouled timber and pulpwood. They also pointed to the long-term damage to the growth prospects of the tourist industry which would obviously result from a change in the environmental quality of the waters off the west coast.

The United States side accepted that further information was required in a number of areas before the risk of damage could be adequately assessed. More research, for example, is required on the effects of an oil spill on the spawning of herring and the migration of salmon.