

Government Orders

What really piqued my interest was that I usually have an unobstructed view of this very distinguished member and I was deprived of this on tonight's occasion, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Unless the hon. member for Mount Royal wants to make a comment, the Chair would be ready to give the hon. parliamentary secretary the clarification he requested.

Mrs. Finestone: I do have a comment to make, Mr. Speaker. I was offered to try this podium and, when I raised the question, I was told that the Minister of Justice used it the other day and even at an earlier occasion, I believe. I thought I was entitled to do the same, but if you think it is contrary to the rules, I will do without. I wanted you to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the Chair is now in a position to make a ruling. The House practice and tradition is indeed that none shall use such a podium but the Minister of Finance for delivering the Budget speech. Another member may have used it. Personally, I was inclined to be tolerant. However, another member having raised the question, I have no choice but to enforce the rules. I would therefore ask you to remove this podium and revert to the usual method.

Mrs. Finestone: Since this government was never big on tolerance, I will respect your decision. I hope this will allow my hon. friend opposite to see me and hear me, but foremost, to listen to me because the problem with the government of the day is that it does not listen.

[*English*]

Mr. MacWilliam: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not intend to interrupt the member's presentation certainly any further, but I am more or less seeking clarification in terms of the definition of your ruling. As you well know, many members have used, for example, stacked books, just to place their reference notes on. I am not sure, in light of your ruling, whether in fact using those stacked notations are in fact a violation of the House. I may provide for you, Mr. Speaker, the fact that many of the provincial legislatures, including the legislature in British Columbia of which I am a former member, makes common everyday use of the podium simply as an

instrument to allow a little more flexibility in the presentation of written notes.

• (1810)

It is simply a matter of being able to have the notes a little more accessible to the glance of the eye as one is making those presentations.

So, I am somewhat confused in terms of your current ruling and whether in fact it rules out the use of any elevation whatsoever.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): You have to understand that, in such cases, parliamentary procedure and tradition are of the utmost importance, and usually hon. members are allowed extensive material. However, the House has been pretty strict on the use of lecterns, and once again, I am bound by the rules of this House. If the House wants to amend the rules, it can do so, but for now, according to parliamentary practise, only the Minister of Finance can use a lectern to make his speech.

Having said that, the House can make appropriate changes, if it so wishes, but for now, I must stick to tradition, according to which no one can use a lectern to make a speech at the House of Commons, although books and other reading material are allowed.

The hon. member for Mount Royal has the floor.

Mrs. Finestone: I will use no material, and no books, just my hands.

[*English*]

If I ever get around to discussing the problems of the CRTC with "he who hears decides" between the podium and the interruptions and the arrival—not unexpected, I would like to say—of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications. It was not the surprise, it was just the pleasure of the arrival of the parliamentary secretary who fundamentally believes in this bill but who has certainly missed my opening comments when I indicated—

Mr. Edwards: No.

Mrs. Finestone: Oh, no? You were here to hear them? Then the hon. member knows the government has had since March to bring this bill in. The fact that his House leader did not was one of the problems in the pushing through of this bill and the zipped-lips across the way, with the exception of his.