

Oral Questions

practice is growing, and the point of my raising the matter as a point of order is to bring it as forcibly as possible to Your Honour's direction and to the attention of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization so that it can be considered.

May I say, with great respect to the members of that committee, that it is my view the present provisional rules which restrain us considerably during the question period should be terminated forthwith so we can get on with the question period by holding ministers accountable and by raising points of order and questions or privilege at the time they arise.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could just say a few words with reference to the answer I gave the hon. member. The meeting I referred to is taking place and he will be informed when representations are made to me. I have no intention of withholding information from the hon. member or from anyone else.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has had the floor for some time on a point of order which is, frankly, little more than a complaint about the quality of answers that have been given. If the hon. member has representations to make to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, he may do so during the day. The minister has taken ten seconds to give a specific answer to the specific point raised by the hon. member for St. John's East. I think that, with other hon. members seeking the floor on points of order, it would be unfair to recognize again the hon. member for St. John's East. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) on a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Peace River on a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I recognize the hon. member for Peace River on a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: I am on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Peace River on a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: I rise on a question of privilege.

An hon. Member: Sit down.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East will understand that the floor has been given to the hon. member for Peace River. If the hon. member still seeks the floor for the purpose of another intervention, he will have to wait until this point of order is concluded.

[Mr. McGrath.]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the government House leader about the business for this week and for next week. Also, I want to say publicly what I have already said to him and the other House leaders privately, namely, that we are prepared to defer our use of tomorrow as an allotted day until the next semester or period in order that the government may proceed with the more harmless items of its legislative program.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House leader of the official opposition for the postponement in respect of the allotted day and putting it off until the next semester. I do not think he has given up that day; that kind of generosity would be beyond my comprehension. At any rate, we are happy about the postponement because there is a great deal of urgent business yet to be done.

When Bill C-77 has been read the second time, we shall move on to Bills C-74, C-27 and C-20. I am not sure of the business beyond that, Mr. Speaker, as there are a number of reports being made currently and we may wish to take up some of those which are made to the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, in respect of the business of the House, may I ask a question which will come as no surprise to the government House leader. For six Thursdays in a row he has told us that the bill to implement the report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs with regard to Canadian veterans who were prisoners of war is still under consideration. Will the minister now tell us whether the government has decided to bring in that bill and, if so, will it be introduced before Christmas?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I specifically raised the matter in cabinet today but I can only say that no decision was reached.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege and I say to you, with the greatest respect, that my understanding of the rules is that a question of privilege has to be heard and takes precedence over all points of order.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. McGrath: I rise on this question of privilege at the time because it had to do with a reply given to my earlier point of order by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) who is no longer in the House; as a result, my position is much more difficult. The minister misled me and the House in his reply.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: That is precisely my question of privilege. I do not intend to proceed with it until the minister is in the House, but I shall raise it at the first opportunity when he is here.