

*Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen*

If that suggestion was indeed made by the parliamentary secretary, that the language relating to the allotted day on that part of the Order Paper might be somewhat less compelling than if it had appeared elsewhere, I would contest that. That part of the Order Paper is unquestionably an integral part of the Order Paper. It is there to fulfil the requirements of the Standing Orders which require notice in matters relating to supply, whether it has to do with a motion for concurrence in estimates or whether it has to do with acts related to allotted days.

The second matter to which I want to turn my attention deals with the very alarming precedent which we may be establishing here. The events of the last two days, the matter which was raised yesterday and the matter which was raised by my colleague today, create a very real danger of censorship, which is something that runs against the very grain of the rights of an opposition, and consequently, the rights of Parliament. One serious result of a continuation of the events that occurred yesterday would be that once a government became aware of the nature of a notice that had been filed for an allotted day, if it took exception to that particular notice or was fearful of not being able to carry the House on a motion of that kind—which we suspect was the case yesterday—it could be in a position to act in a way which would deny the opposition the right that had been established for it to proceed with that motion or action. That is clearly censorship and an addition to the limitations put upon the capacity of the whole Parliament generally and specifically of the official opposition, of other opposition parties and any other Members of Parliament who might disagree with a particular item of government business. This is another limitation upon the capacity of members of the House of Commons to control the actions and decisions of the government. As these limitations continue to accumulate, we will have no parliamentary system left in any honest sense of the word.

The point which was raised by my seatmate and colleague, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), again speaks to the question of potential censorship. If the practice which occurred today, which was probably inadvertent, continues, not only is there the capacity of censorship on the right of an opposition to raise a question, there is the censorship of the very right of that opposition to have the language of the motions that it intends to have introduced stand on the Order Paper of the House of Commons.

The more important matter which I would like to deal with was raised explicitly by the hon. member for York East (Mr. Collenette). He raised the critical and fundamental question freshly today in the argument of this point of order and it concerns the question of to whom the allotted days belong. Do they belong to the government? Are they subject to absolute control by the government, or do they belong to the official opposition whose primary responsibility is to keep control of the government and stop it from excess? I noted what the hon. member for York East said, and if I heard him correctly, I believe he said that allotted days "are indeed government days." The hon. member nods that that is his view. I disagree

with that view strenuously. Not only does it run against all the traditions and understanding we have had in the House, it very clearly runs against what is spelled out in *Beauchesne* and what is spelled out in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. To accept the view that allotted days are indeed government days is to extend even more the control of the government of the day over the House of Commons.

● (1450)

All of us who have been students of this place and believe in the importance of parliamentary democracy know that one of the grave dangers which has developed over the years is that the power of individual Members of Parliament has diminished and the power of the government has increased. We now have virtually no means to control a government which is pursuing a policy which is unpopular with the majority of members of the House and bad for the country. Powers which used to exist here and used to reside with oppositions here have been stripped away one by one. As my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) has indicated, one of the most dramatic changes in the powers of individual Members of Parliament was enforced by closure, because Parliament would not willingly have accepted that. The extraordinary recourse to closure had to be used. We may very well be on the brink of even one more major limitation upon the capacity of Parliament to do our basic job, which is to control, in the name of the people of Canada, the executive members of the government.

My colleague, the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes), made a very important point. It was not simply members on the opposition side of the House of Commons who were interested in being heard on the matter which would have been debated today. Undoubtedly there were members on the government side who wanted to be heard, some of whom may well have wanted to vote with the opposition against the government. Indeed, I believe it was for that reason the matter was withdrawn.

However, the point is not limited to what was denied Parliament today. The point has to do with what might be denied Parliament permanently, and what might be denied Parliament permanently is the opportunity to use this instrument to assert control of the executive by individual members of the House of Commons on any side of the House and of any party.

The hon. member for York East has quoted *Beauchesne* Citation 478(1). He quoted it for a third time. The relevant part is the following:

Although technically the business under discussion is government business, motions given precedence on these allotted days may be moved only by members in opposition to the government. To this extent, there is a distinction between the business of supply and other government business with respect to S.O. 18.

The important word here is "technically", and what the language of Citation 478(1) makes abundantly clear is that for a technical reason it might be grouped under government business, but the reality is that it belongs not to the government but to the opposition. That is why the word "technically" is there. There is no other explanation for the presence of that