

Business of the House

The fact of the matter is that if substantial changes are to be made regarding the interpretation or use of Standing Order 43, then these changes will have to be made by members of the House, not by the Chair. I do not see this to be at any time the function of the Chair. I do not see it as my role in the Chair at any time to endeavour to propose changes. I have tried to explain my interpretation of every rule along the way but, after all, the House operates for the benefit of the members, not for the benefit of the Chair. Experiences like the ones we have had recently break down the operations of the House to the detriment of members just as much, I am sure, as to the detriment of the Chair.

Perhaps what I have just said can be considered a serious allegation, but nevertheless it is one that hon. members should consider carefully. There are obvious problems with Standing Order 43, and I simply reiterate that I would welcome suggestions from hon. members and also careful consideration of the rule by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. Certainly, I agree with the sentiments that have been expressed to the effect that if the rule continues to be misused, as obviously it has judging from the recent number of motions in the House, something must be done to correct the situation. Otherwise, it will again be for the Chair to do so if the practice continues.

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WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, might I ask the government House leader what is the business for tomorrow and next week? In view of the discussion that has just taken place, I would also ask whether he has any plans regarding reference of the rules of procedure of the House to the Standing Committee.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, if I may deal with the last question first, the House leaders of the respective parties have been looking at the terms of reference that might be submitted to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, and I hope that within the next few days we can reach agreement and put the matter of the order paper.

As for the business, today we will proceed with Bill C-49, the amendments to the Income Tax Act. Tonight, of course, we will revert to the special procedure to enable my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to make his statement. Tomorrow being Friday, we have decided to abandon temporarily the income tax bill—

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): No; "relinquish".

Mr. Sharp: I am sorry, relinquish temporarily the income tax bill since it is our hope that the House will be in committee of the whole shortly on the bill and Friday is not a very good day to press votes. Therefore, tomorrow we will call Bill C-33 which deals with the export and import of cultural property. I have also circulated a list of bills of the housekeeping variety that we might have an opportunity to deal with later tomorrow if Bill C-33 is

[Mr. Speaker.]

disposed of before the end of the consideration of government orders. On Monday we will revert to my colleague's bill, which we are relinquishing only tomorrow, until it is completed.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre rising on a point of order?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the government House leader whether he has had discussions with the Minister of Veterans Affairs regarding the reference to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs of the Hermann report? Can he say whether the reference might be made soon? I know the minister likes debates that are short or instantaneous and I believe he would find ready agreement in the House to refer the Hermann report to the standing committee without debate.

● (1540)

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Veterans Affairs has received a letter from the secretary-treasurer of the National Council of Veterans Organizations on this subject. Mr. Chadderton has suggested to my colleague that the earliest date upon which they might expect to have submissions ready for the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs would be the week of March 17. I think it is my colleague's wish that before then we should refer the report, but not very far in advance of that time.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning procedures in the House today, in particular the procedures followed by yourself in recognizing certain members for the purpose of asking questions and relating to that your decisions in permitting the exercise of the right to ask supplementary questions. I recognize at the outset that there is no automatic right of any member to ask supplementary questions to add to the first question he asks, but it is a long established practice in the House that members be permitted, at least during the major part of the question period, to ask at least one supplementary question. That is my first point, and I will come back to it.

My second point is that since this parliament has been convened, Your Honour has decided to recognize questioners in rough proportion to the number of members which the parties have in this House. All parties, mine included, have accepted the fairness of that procedure. The point I should like to make to Your Honour—I do so both with great respect and great seriousness—is that you might consider your own decisions in the past week to see if they have been made with the usual standard of equity, in terms of recognition of questioners and, in particular, that you consider the ruling you made, not only pursuant to the questions I asked today—this has already been referred to by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—but also in respect of our third questioner in the House today, the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) who was permitted one question only and no supplementary. I would ask you to consider that decision in relation to the number of supplementary questions you permitted members of other parties today. I simply ask you to consider it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!