

Summer Recess

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, there is a question of equity and fairness here.

Mr. Gauthier: Look who's talking.

Mr. Beatty: It is your responsibility as Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: We hear shouts of derision from the government side when we talk about equity and fairness. I do not have to talk to you about your responsibilities, Mr. Speaker. You are fully aware of them. You know full well that it is the responsibility of the Speaker to protect the rights of Parliament and to protect the rights of individual members of Parliament.

My colleague said he was on his feet prior to the commencement of the question. Even if there is a grey area, and even if there is debate or question as to whether or not the hon. member rose to his feet during the commencement of the question being put, as opposed to being on his feet prior to that, the question with which the Chair is faced is one of fairness. If a decision is to be made, is it to be made on the side of terminating the debate thereby depriving members of Parliament of the opportunity to be heard? Or is it the Speaker's responsibility to protect the rights of Parliament. And, in particular, to protect the rights of freedom of speech of the individual members of this House?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council just read from the rules. It is very clear from Beauchesne's Citation 217 that the Speaker is to put the question only if no member wishes to seek the floor.

We know now at this point, without the question having been put, that at least one member of Parliament seeks the floor.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: Let them shout on the other side. However, I do not think they will succeed in gagging Parliament because it is your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to protect the rights of Parliament from an oppressive majority and from trickery. A member of Parliament, duly elected to this place, is seeking the floor to debate a motion that is before the House at the present time. It is clear that the question has not yet been put.

An hon. Member: You were not even here.

Mr. Beatty: A member is seeking the floor.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that you have no choice, nor would any other incumbent in that Chair have any choice but to make the decision on the side of freedom of speech and on the side of the rights of an individual member of Parliament to be heard on an essential issue. To do anything else would be to deprive members of the most important function in this Parliament, which is here to talk about the issues facing the country. To take away that right from a member of Parliament deprives all members of Parliament. It is indeed a great undermining of the whole function of Parliament itself.

An hon. member seeks the floor. The question has not yet been put; I submit that, in fairness, in equity and in defence of the rights of Parliament, you will choose to recognize my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona, because there is no other option.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to point out that I was here when the bell rang, as were a number of other members on this side. When we came into the House there were two members on the far side of the House. As I understand it, the rules are the rules and you cannot roll back history any more than you can roll back a vote taken in December, 1979.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that you came into the Chamber and took your chair. The bells started. We came in. When a certain number of members are in the House, the bells stop. You rose, you went to recognize the hon. member who was speaking at five o'clock. That member did not rise. Some voices on this side said, "vote, question, question." You rose and said "Is the House ready for the question?" There was no voice from any side of the House opposed to the question. Therefore, you rose and began to read the question, at which point the hon. member rose. Those are the rules of the House. That is what took place. You cannot roll back history. I must say that if anyone is good at working edges, rules and points of order and other games in this House, it is members on the other side and not members on this side of the House. We were here and we work within the rules.

Mr. Taylor: Look at the sneaky way you do it.

Mr. McKnight: Mr. Speaker, I was not in the House.

Mr. Deans: Sit down then.

Mr. McKnight: And I agree with members on the other side, I was not in the House. But I happen to have available to me cable television. If you want to go into sport, and I do not think you want to, sir, but occasionally referees and umpires have reviewed the electronic media. I came into this House when you were standing and I saw you put the question, but heard an hon. member saying "Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker". I am sure that you would like to review electronic *Hansard* or the video of the proceedings of this House, and following that you would then arrive at a fair decision. I know that in your capacity you would not want to deny any member of this House his right to be heard on an issue that is very important to him and his constituents.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, to begin with I would like to say that I have never in my life, or in the ten years I have been a member of this place, seen a government so anxious to leave Parliament.

The only thing which causes me to believe the government wants to leave is because it has something to hide. What this government has to hide is what we have been debating all afternoon, namely the mess with respect to the uranium cartel. That is what this government has to hide.

I think I should put this day in its proper perspective.