

Private Members' Business

4. Beyond the vast legacy of tradition implanted in Canada by the preamble to the Constitution Act, one section above all affects procedure. Section 18 permits the adoption in Canada of all of the privileges of Parliament current in the British House of Commons. Few of these are of greater importance than the right to regulate the internal proceedings of the House, or more specifically, to establish binding rules of procedure.

Clearly, that is precisely what is happening. Nothing more sinister. The suggestion that the House could meet one day a year and get supply is absurd. Prior to the rule changes of 1969, the Appropriations Act was a stand-alone act. It could have been closed off in one day.

The changes in 1969 brought forward a lot of days during which members of the opposition had an opportunity to challenge items in the estimates.

I ask the hon. House leader of the New Democratic Party to show me once where his party used those allotted days to challenge the estimates. Not once did his party challenge supply. To now stand up and say that it is a sacred right that is somehow being infringed is an absurdity that goes in the face of the practices of his own party.

In terms of the rule providing for changes in Standing Orders or the kind of consent motions we seek by unanimous consent, the hon. member neglected to mention it is proscribed by having it possible to introduce them only during Routine Proceedings when this House is habitually full.

Therefore, the 25 member requirement is a significant and major inhibition to abuse of that. To suggest that can be used somehow during Routine Proceedings to commit the heinous crime he has suggested is equally absurd.

In any event, I am now departing into the realm of debate on the rules which, if we had not had the childish behaviour of the New Democratic Party earlier today, we could have had that debate in substance, which is what the people of Canada expect from mature politicians who represent them here in Parliament, not the kind of childish behaviour we saw from the New Democratic Party today and continue to see.

• (1700)

Mr. Speaker: Before proceeding perhaps I might indicate that I will of course hear further argument on this matter. The hon. government House leader may

want to address the Chair further. I certainly will hear that at an appropriate time.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the reason I halted my remarks is that having wasted all the time this afternoon it is now Private Members' Hour and there is no longer an opportunity. The combination of this initial procedure and now going on to another day to debate this point of order to further delay and obstruct this House, I have serious concerns about that.

I would rather have that debate on the procedural argument right now if there were consent to do that. If there is agreement, let us present our arguments on this point of order now, have it ruled on, and then we can proceed with orderly business tomorrow. That is certainly my preferred option.

I would ask if there is agreement at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker: Just so that everybody understands, the hon. government House Leader put it to the House that we would continue this argument into Private Members' Hour. If there had been consent we could have done that. All I am making clear is that I certainly will hear members further on it at an appropriate time.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma—Mining; the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap—The Environment; the hon. member for York West—Air Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CENTENNIAL FLAME RESEARCH AWARD ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT—CONCURRENCE IN SENATE
AMENDMENTS

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Etobicoke—Lakeshore) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-258, an act respecting the establishment of the Centennial Flame Research Award