

Business of the House

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege, is the Prime Minister trying to suggest that he wishes to ask questions of the opposition every day?

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I also rise on this question of privilege. I wish to draw to Your Honour's attention the fact that in the past there has always been pressure for the presence of government officials in the gallery. This was also the case when I occupied your position. However, after a count of the number of seats available in the official gallery, it was soon concluded that unless ministers wanted to be followed by a legion of officials there was ample room for every ministry to be represented by one or two officials, and there was no need to invade the gallery for distinguished persons by what we might call today the ministerial mafia.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest there is no point in pursuing the point raised by the hon. member for Timiskaming. Certainly there is some importance in the point he has raised. However, at the same time hon. members know it is not for the Speaker to change the rules of the house. I am sure notice has been taken of the suggestion by the hon. member for Timiskaming and by other hon. members who have spoken after he brought this point to the attention of the house. I can only repeat that I will consider it my duty to bring to the attention of the committee in due course the hon. member's view that an official record of attendance in the House of Commons be inaugurated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. J.-A. Mongrain (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

I wish to confess that I counted the number of Conservative members present on Tuesday night, during half an hour. There was not one in the house.

[*English*]

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I merely want to raise an additional point on this question of privilege. While you have made it quite clear that it has been the custom for officials in the gallery to make notes necessary to properly fulfil their duties, in my view specific notes regarding the attendance or otherwise of any members of this house are quite contrary to their responsibility as employees of the public service. Further, I suggest that this would create a serious precedent in that it would constitute a

form of coercion. I think we have always held it to be one of the marks of this house that no form of coercion exists here whereby any member of the house is placed under undue pressure. I suggest, sir, that through your office it be ascertained that no public official attempts by his activities in the gallery to carry out such activities as might encroach on the full freedom that is possessed by the members of this house.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the fact that there are a number of vacant seats in the official gallery, and perhaps this nullifies one remark made earlier. My second point refers to the right hon. Prime Minister's statement regarding the presence of ministers in the house. I want to make it clear that we have not been objecting to the presence of ministers in the house but rather to their absence, and I think he has misrepresented the point. Further, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that the debate we are having now is not very constructive.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, I will resume my seat with the final remark that I think perhaps we should take cognizance of the point that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration is possibly trying to ease the unemployment situation through the presence of these strongmen in the gallery.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the question period has expired, may I ask whether the house leader would be entitled to rise to his feet and tell us what will be the business for next week.

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, we propose to continue the debate on the two motions to concur in the reports of the procedure committee until debate on them has been completed. The remaining item of business for this part of the session would be the ways and means resolution preceding the anti-dumping bill, and all stages of the anti-dumping bill itself.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the house leader in reference to a matter discussed last week. May I ask whether