

Supply

That is the chronology, Mr. Speaker. As we stand now, the matter has never been resolved with respect to the whole question of conflict of interest. It is still a current topic which is extant, still before us, never finally resolved, and is a matter which I believe this Committee, indeed, should take seriously.

As there was willingness in 1974 to deal with this issue, let there be willingness again today. It is a subject of immense importance to Parliament and Parliamentarians, for if this House is to have any meaning or any relevancy, it must be able to scrutinize the executive and draw the rules under which Ministers of the Crown conduct their affairs. As I have indicated before, today it affects Liberal Ministers; tomorrow it will be Ministers from this side of the House. In that sense, when it comes before Committee it will not be a particularly partisan issue, but undoubtedly will be treated with the same degree of concern and co-operation as the current committee on parliamentary reform. We on this side of the House have again sacrificed another Opposition Day to this issue, as we did in 1974, and I urge Government Members to accept this motion as we have presented it today.

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who has just spoken is a Member of the select Committee on Procedure and Organization, as he has indicated, and, therefore, is very well aware of the Standing Orders of this House. I believe it is quite appropriate to put the question to him since the motion proposed today has been proposed under Standing Order 62(9), dealing with non-confidence motions, and since Standing Order 62(9) clearly states:

On the last day appointed for proceedings on a no-confidence motion—

The vote shall be proceeded with forthwith. If the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West is sincere, and if the other speakers from his Party who preceded him are sincere, why did they not put today's motion under Standing Order 62(11)?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because it gives me an opportunity again to reiterate a point which I made. First, we attempted through the Question Period and other opportunities to get the agreement of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to have this reference to the Committee made without the necessity of a debate on an allotted day.

Second, this motion was brought forward in reaction to a refusal by the Government, and it was the only method which we had as the Official Opposition to indicate our strong feelings that the Government was wrong and that it was a matter of confidence, as far as we were concerned, because it was so serious.

Third, we did not propose that the House agree. We did not initiate the proposal that the House agree by unanimous consent to waive the motion under Standing Order 62(9). Indeed, it was the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) who stood in his place on a point of order and asked the House for a waiver of that particular rule for the purposes of this debate. At that time there was quick consultation by Hon. Members of this side of the House. Our House Leader, the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis),

stood on behalf of the Conservative Party and said that we were prepared to agree to the proposal put by the Leader of the NDP. It was then up to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet), who refused that unanimous consent, as well as the Minister of State for International Trade, who was the first Government speaker.

Mr. Herbert: I repeat, Mr. Speaker, whatever agreement was made, we have a Standing Order, and the Standing Order is quite clear. On Friday of last week, the Official Opposition decided to pursue today's proceedings under Standing Order 62(9). Whatever the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) might have suggested, it was not he who was responsible for proposing today's motion under Standing Order 62(9). That was the choice of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I repeat again, if that Party was sincere in what it was saying today, why was today's motion not proposed under Standing Order 62(11)?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to speak at cross purposes. I am trying to deal squarely and precisely with the question raised by the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil. The point is this: this is the final Opposition day in this period of supply. We were obliged to bring forward the motion under that rule because it did require a vote.

Mr. Herbert: Why?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It is the last opportunity in a supply period. That is a technicality which we, as it turned out, on the suggestion on the New Democratic Party, were quite prepared to overlook and not hold the Government to confidence on this particular vote. There are other opportunities where we will pursue our right to bring the Government down. In this instance, we thought the matter would be of such importance and of such relevance and of such a non-partisan nature, we were prepared to accept and agree with the proposal made by the Leader of the NDP.

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, just to conclude this point, Standing Order 62(9) says:

—not more than two Opposition motions shall be no-confidence motions against the Government.

Therefore, the Opposition has the choice to let one non-confidence motion go. Today's motion did not need to be called under 62(9).

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, all I can do again is just repeat myself. Maybe the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil and I should exchange memos on this very learned point. All I can tell him is that I have great faith in the House Leader of my Party and in the mover of this motion, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nielsen), that if there was any way they could have made it easier for the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil to vote for it, they would have done so. But they were obliged by the rules to bring in this motion in the form in which it was. If that is not clear to the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil, I can make another couple of suggestions; he can absent himself from the House if it is causing him too much humiliation to have to