

Point of Order—Mr. Hnatyshyn

to anyone, including myself. Second, he admitted today that he allowed me to see the Bill and to have the Bill as long as I did not show it to any other person. Today in Question Period the Minister stated that he had consulted with the Government House Leader and that it would be possible for me to have each Member of our caucus, 102 Members, provided with a copy of the legislation. Specifically that was the commitment and undertaking made by the Minister of Justice.

Over the lunch hour I attempted to have copies made of the Bill for that particular purpose by the House of Commons printing unit. House of Commons printing has refused to print this document, on the basis that it is a confidential proposed Bill of the House of Commons and that it is against the policy of the printing branch of the House of Commons to print any Bill, let alone proposed and confidential Bills. Then I got in touch with the law branch, and it would not allow me to have copies of this Bill for distribution to my colleagues on this side of the House.

My point of order is simply that I am being stymied in attempting as quickly as possible to apprise all my colleagues of the actual content of this legislation. Either the Acting Government House Leader should stand in his place and agree, within a matter of minutes, to provide me with 102 copies of the Bill so that I can circulate it, not to staff, not to any other person, but directly and only to Members of Parliament; or the House should make a ruling so that the printing branch will allow me to have the Bill printed and I can distribute it to my colleagues on the basis on which it was given to me by the Minister of Justice.

I raise this matter as a point of order because I am not able to carry out the important role I have to play in view of the statement made by the Minister of Justice on behalf of the Government House Leader. I ask Your Honour for your intervention and assistance in this situation which has arisen because I cannot have copies made in the House of Commons printing branch.

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this is a point of order. It seems to me that there is a photocopy machine, certainly in the offices of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). I do not know what is preventing the Hon. Member from using it.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You tell me where I can get it printed.

Mr. Smith: Perhaps if he were to use it, he would not try to score little points as he is trying to do today. I regret that he has taken this approach because my primary concern is to get that Bill through.

I think the Minister of Justice (Mr. MacGuigan) was trying to accommodate him as the official critic of his Party by giving him a copy of the Bill. I regret that the whole issue has taken on the tone it has as a result of the position of the Hon. Member. I suggest that he go up to the fourth floor and use the photocopy machine of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to be absolutely clear. The Acting Government House Leader refuses to give me sufficient copies, but he is giving me permission to take this Bill outside the House of Commons and to put it in other hands, hands other than those of Members of Parliament for the purpose of reproducing it.

Mr. Mazankowski: He just gave you that permission.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I want to make it quite clear, because I am not aware who has photocopy machines. My material is done in the normal way by the House of Commons printing service. I will not go around asking every Member of Parliament whether they have photocopy machines in their offices.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point. It amazes me how things can get so twisted. I say to the Acting Government House Leader that it is really not good enough to suggest that someone should find his or her own way to reproduce a document for Members of the House of Commons.

• (1410)

I do not want to engage in a battle over it. If it is the Government's desire, as I understood it to be, that Members of the House should be given access to the document and given an opportunity to look at it in the hope that we might be able to come to an agreement for its quick passage, it would not be unreasonable for Members of the Opposition and, for that matter, Members of the Government Party to think that the Government of Canada, with its vast resources, could find a way to produce a copy of the document for each Member of Parliament.

I do not like to become involved in these questions but it cannot be acceptable that it is the responsibility of the individual critic for any Party to obtain the duplicating machine to copy a document which is, in essence, a Government document for which approval to distribute among Members has been given by the appropriate Minister.

In an effort not to prolong matters or make them any worse, and in the interest of trying to resolve the unnecessary dispute over passage of this legislation before Christmas, I would ask that we consider the matter no further and that the Government Deputy House Leader might consider, in light of what has been said, whether copies of this particular Bill may be made available. If copies are available, would it be possible for every Member to receive a copy of the Bill in an envelope marked "Confidential"?

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, the point just raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) of course makes eminent sense. My colleague for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) was absolutely correct in his point of order.

It would be an abuse of the privileges of Parliament to pursue the course of action which has been suggested to us by the distinguished Parliamentary Secretary to the President of