

*Supply*

Islands. I did not note the time that it reached the Table, but it did reach the Table, I believe, prior to the commencement of yesterday's debate. Perhaps I am a few minutes out on that one way or the other, but it certainly reached the Table before the motion of the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap.

On that basis, Sir, with great respect, I suggest to the Chair that it allow the practice to continue whereby the Official Opposition has the discretion to determine when the New Democratic Party will obtain its allotted days of the total of 25, having operated on the basis of the semesters as they come up rather than on a calendar year. We are following practices that have not been abused in the past. I can assure you, Sir, that as long as I have any power to make recommendations for my caucus with respect to the allotment of those days, that practice will not suffer any abuse in the future. I can assure you, Sir, that the New Democratic Party will, as it has in the past, obtain its full allotment both of days of a total of 25 and of votes.

I would strongly suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you exercise your discretion in favour of calling the motion of the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands even if it is only on the basis of its having been filed in priority.

**Mr. Deans:** Mr. Speaker, I ask only for fairness and I concede that we have had no reason to complain up until now. In fact, I can recall at least one occasion and perhaps two occasions where, at the request of the Official Opposition and in order to facilitate its own particular requirements of the time, we took an Opposition day. I can recall that on two occasions there were other events occurring outside of the House that Hon. Members of the Official Opposition were desirous of attending. On those occasions we accepted the day although, quite frankly, it would not have been a day of our choosing if we had had any choice at all.

I would like to deal with some of the arguments raised by the Hon. Member. To begin with, if one were to accept the argument put forward by the Hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition that the time of filing should be a pre-determining factor, then of course we could today file half a dozen motions that would then sit on the Notice Paper throughout the entire period of supply. That would give our motions priority if one were to accept that argument. Of course, that argument cannot be accepted. The time of filing does in no way interfere with the right of the Speaker to determine the business to be called at this point in time.

I put to you, Mr. Speaker, that contrary to what has been said by the Hon. House Leader for the Official Opposition, it is not solely the responsibility of the Official Opposition to determine which Party will in fact be allocated the day for the purpose of supply debate. Quite clearly, the Standing Orders give that right to the Chair in cases of doubt and in cases of dispute. It is therefore incumbent upon the Chair to make a decision in circumstances such as these and is not incumbent upon the Official Opposition to dictate to anyone how that decision ought to be made.

● (1130)

I am operating on the basis of the provisional Standing Orders which are in place for a calendar year. If so, I can only assume that one must argue about the right of individuals to be recognized, the right of certain processes to be followed, within the calendar year. There will be a new calendar year starting in January next, hopefully with the continuation of the provisional Standing Orders, and we would anticipate that we would get our share of the allotted days during the calendar year 1984.

One argument made by the House Leader of the Official Opposition is that the Chair does not know who will be granted the fifth allotted day. As the House Leader for the Official Opposition would no doubt affirm, I want to make it clear that I raised that matter with him before we filed the motion. I raised it last week, in fact, and asked whether or not we would be receiving one of the three days designated by the Government House Leader. The response was an unequivocal no. I then assumed, I think quite rightly so, that it was the intention of the Official Opposition to utilize each of those days for their own use. That would mean that out of the five allotted days during this period, we would not receive any. Not only would we not get a voting day, which I am not going to argue about at the moment, but we would not even get a day at all.

I waited to see whether the Official Opposition had in fact filed the motions, which they did to take up each of the days, before I filed on behalf of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap. I was hoping that perhaps as a result of communications I sent to the Official Opposition House Leader, they would see the fairness of giving us one of the five days. I say, Mr. Speaker, that one of the five days would be less than one might reasonably expect given the numerical breakdown of the Opposition, but we understand that you can only break it down according to an even division. You cannot get part of a day. So we are prepared to accept less than what we expect we might be entitled to as a result of the numerical breakdown in the Opposition.

If, however, we were not given the day today, it would mean, since we now know the Official Opposition intends to take the final day also for themselves, that out of the 25 days in this calendar year we would have received five. That is clearly less than we would be entitled to and it would mean we would be denied the opportunity of putting forward a motion which we frankly feel is of some considerable importance.

On the basis of fairness, we are asking for no more than we should reasonably expect to get. Having waited, hoping the Official Opposition might change its mind, I think we dealt with it in a reasonable way. We waited until the motions were clearly there for both days before we decided to file, in the hope that maybe the Official Opposition might change its mind.

I would argue very strongly that it would be a bad precedent for the Speaker to determine that the Chair has no jurisdiction in determining which of the two Opposition motions—three in this case but two that we are arguing over—should be be