

nothing to harm them. It will only help assist them in their efforts, together with the deregulation policy of my hon. friend, the Deputy Prime Minister. Cease your attempt to scare Canadians.

Mr. Ouellet: Help the Americans.

Ms. Copps: It is a bloated falsehood.

Mr. Speaker: I must advise that the time allotted for Question Period has expired. I note the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre rising and I will try to be sure that I see him tomorrow.

I might just say to Hon. Members that we did not do as well in the number of questions today as perhaps I and others had hoped, especially after the last several days when we were doing very well. Perhaps we can do better tomorrow.

The Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood on a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

DISPOSITION OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege regarding the handling of my Private Members' Bill C-204. The question concerns the nature of Private Members' Bills, how they will be handled, whether or not they will be obstructed and whether or not there will be two classes of private Members in this House, namely, private Members who are Conservatives and may get their Bills passed and private Members who are not Conservatives and who will have their Bills obstructed.

There have been three private Members' Bills which have been adopted since parliamentary reform, a reform which we all know was intended to give private Members the opportunity to have serious business dealt with, debated in the House, voted on and sent to committee and returned for approval. Only three private Members' Bills have been passed, and all three of them have been Conservative Bills. Some of them have been dealt with very, very quickly indeed.

Yet in the case of my Bill, it was introduced and read for the first time October 6, 1986. It was finally read for the second time after many hours of debate on May 29, 1987.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. All of what the Hon. Member says about the number of Bills passed, who sponsored them and the chronology of her own Bill may be very accurate and may be of considerable interest, but I would ask the Hon. Member to let the Chair know what is the point of privilege.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, the point of privilege is that there has been obstruction of my Bill. I wish to give you details of that obstruction and I wish to show that it has been treated

differently from other Bills. That is the reason I referred to the other Bills. I do not think it is a coincidence that Conservative Bills have been passed and mine has not.

My Bill was approved at second reading. It was referred to committee. It took a long time before the committee received it. There was a delay of 12 sitting days before the first meeting was held. Standing Orders require that the committee meet within two sitting days. There was a further delay of 19 regular sitting days between the third and the fourth meetings of the committee. There was active obstruction in the committee during that period, June 26 to October 6.

There has been one chairperson and, of course, it is the Speaker who appoints the chair. The chair has acted in a biased manner. There has been a deputy chair acting in his absence. On five occasions a deputy chair has substituted for the chair. In one case, the person who substituted was an Hon. Member who has himself declared a conflict of interest, in effect, on the subject, namely, the Hon. Member for Simcoe South (Mr. Stewart) who has been an active Member of the committee. He has obstructed work on the committee, has acted as the chair, and I will refer to the details in a moment, Mr. Speaker. He was actively obstructionist in meetings yesterday. He circulated to all Members of this House a statement declaring that he had an interest in opposing the Bill because of a private interest, that "I freely admit that I am biased because in the real world I am a wholesale distributor—"

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is in some difficulty. Hon. Members know that generally speaking it is not the Chair's function, nor does the Chair procedurally have the authority, to interfere in committee proceedings.

The Hon. Member may well have a complaint. It is not for the Chair, certainly at this point, to say one way or the other. The difficulty I am having is identifying a point of privilege.

I must say to all Hon. Members and to the public watching and listening that privilege concerns something done which makes it impossible for Hon. Members to carry out their duties as Members of Parliament. It might, but generally speaking, does not arise just because someone may not be getting a Bill through a committee as fast as one likes, getting a motion supported or getting witnesses recognized. That is a matter of the internal workings of the committee.

I am not saying that there might not be a case where activities of a chairperson or the activities of other Members in committee might well amount to a point of privilege, but I am having difficulty—I am not diminishing in any way the Hon. Member's complaint—in seeing it as a point of privilege that the Chair can resolve. I will hear the Hon. Member further. I would ask her please to try to isolate exactly what the point of privilege is.