

Oral Questions

into consultation with the House of Commons and Senate, through the usual and accepted channels, as a way to deal with this matter which is consistent with the rights and privileges of members and of Canadians generally?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the government has done nothing but respond to a unanimous request from an all-party committee, of which the hon. member was a member, and he is asking now whether in fact the government will unilaterally amend these regulations for which he asked.

I would remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, it was his point of privilege in which he stated that he was not able to access the House of Commons because of demonstrators at the front of the Parliament Buildings that led the Board of Internal Economy to reach this unanimous conclusion.

I find it surprising that he should now resort to what he thinks is a politically opportune time to score political tricks.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister forgets that my question of privilege was about how I was limited in access to the Parliament Buildings in my work as a member of Parliament.

I want to ask the minister, by what type of strange Tory double-think and double-talk could he say that a regulation making it possibly illegal for members of Parliament to have access to the grounds of the Parliament Buildings could be a response to my concern about broader rights for members of Parliament?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition did not have time to write out his question so I will forgive his misspeaking it.

To suggest that somehow these regulations prevent a member of Parliament from accessing Parliament Hill is absurd. The hon. Leader of the Opposition raised a point of privilege saying that demonstrators prevented him from accessing the House of Commons. That matter was referred to a committee of this House. It was in part

because of that concern that the Board of Internal Economy, of which the hon. member is a member, unanimously asked for these regulations. The Board of Internal Economy can ask for amendments but that is where this should happen. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should not go back on his word this way.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I certainly stand by the decision taken by the board, which was not a decision for these specific regulations and we were never shown the regulations.

I specifically want to ask the government House Leader, when the regulations state that "no person shall engage in any of the following activities", how can he say that these regulations do not apply to members of Parliament? They apply to members of Parliament surely from the wording itself.

Therefore, I ask the minister again, will he withdraw the regulations until this matter can be gone into further through the accepted channels in the House or the Senate? If he is concerned about the freedoms of members and the public, then why will he not do this? Certainly, it is a perfectly clear, logical and simple request.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, of course the regulations apply to every citizen. Not even members of Parliament are above the law. But the Leader of the Opposition should examine the "blues". What he said earlier is that the regulations prevent members of Parliament from accessing the House of Commons and that is simply not true. They do no such thing.

As to the question of whether in fact the government would respond favourably to another decision from the Board of Internal Economy, they generally do, and of course they will. The decision that is now in place was a result of a unanimous request from the Board of Internal Economy.

If the hon. member, for political opportunistic reasons, now wants to reconsider his decision of last November 22, well so be it. Let us do it through the proper channels.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, let us make it perfectly clear that the Board of Internal