

Business of the House

like to raise a question in advance to make sure that the Prime Minister will not make it tomorrow. I think that is not a valid point of order. But the hon. member does give me an opportunity to tell him and members of the opposition that we on this side do not think that that proceeding has been working very satisfactorily.

If you look at the Standing Order and see how it has been applied, you will see a very vast difference between the rule and the application, because instead of commenting directly—as is required under the rules—members of the opposition have taken the opportunity to discourse on a variety of subjects and bring up criticisms relating to the government that are not involved in the original statement. So it is not a very satisfactory proceeding from our point of view, but we have used it frequently under that disability. However, I would tell the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton that I am surprised he would use the introduction of television as a way of persuading us that the traditional procedures of the House should be changed.

● (1522)

As the hon. member knows, there is no obligation on a minister or on the Prime Minister to make every single statement on policy in the House of Commons. If we did that, we would be taking up a great deal of time in the House of Commons. So it has become the practice to make statements in the House under that proceeding only on relatively few occasions. If hon. members want the practice to be extended any further, I think we will have to come together and improve it somewhat. I just wanted to make that comment.

Mr. Speaker: We have to clarify the basis upon which hon. members are participating. We have recognized, as a point of order, something which is not—in the pure sense of the word—really a matter of order; but after the question period on Thursday of every week we recognize, under the general heading of inquiry about House business, points which are taken by way of points of order. I do not see any way in which I can limit unduly the participation of hon. members. The matters which have been raised do relate to House business or to anticipated House business, but are not strictly connected to the point of order. If there are hon. members who want to participate in the discussion as it relates to House business, I think I have to permit that to be done.

Mr. Muir: Mr. Speaker, I am glad you clarified the situation, because we were getting a little fuzzy and ranging from one point of order to another. I hesitate to disagree with my good friend and colleague from Cape Breton, the government House leader, but it was not worthy of him to make the statement which he did make. We know the purpose for which he made that statement was purely political. When the hon. member for Calgary Centre raised his point of order, he specifically stated—and it is recorded in *Hansard*—that we were absolutely in favour of vote 31a for Devco. A little later the hon. member said we would have to increase it so we could open new mines and provide employment in Cape Breton.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

The government has not been willing to do that, has not been doing it, and is not yet prepared to do it. The reason the hon. member for Calgary Centre raised the point was that the government is trying to sneak in a legislative item with a vote for a specified amount. Your Honour corrected that. Your Honour is the first commoner in this House, and any reflection on what was said yesterday is a reflection upon you. I think Your Honour brought in the right decision. As has already been stated, if the Deputy Prime Minister would like to bring in a bill this afternoon to cover these moneys for municipalities in Cape Breton, I can assure him that no member of this party would debate it: we would vote for it as a whole. I am sure members of the New Democratic Party and members of all parties in this House would be quite happy and willing to go ahead unanimously, without one word being said.

Some hon. Members: Hear,hear!

Mr. Muir: Far be it from me to get involved with points of procedure in this House. That is one thing I do not believe in—not too much, anyhow. Many things happen which should not happen. But in this instance I ask the Deputy Prime Minister to get on his feet and say he will bring a bill in Monday afternoon when we meet, or tomorrow—whenever he wants to bring it in—and it will go flying through very quickly. At the same time, he might add another \$20 million, \$30 million or \$50 million, whatever is required. It seems we have \$100 million here, \$50 million there and \$70 million somewhere else, to go all around the world. All we want is enough money in Cape Breton to open at least two mines to put some people back to work.

The Deputy Minister knows that there are between 3,000 and 4,000 applications for work in the coal mines now, despite the fact that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce says derogatory things about Cape Breton coal miners and their work ethics. Bring in the funds and we will vote for them unanimously.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, if I had had the opportunity before the government House leader spoke, I would have liked to have risen on a point of order affecting the business of the House and sought an assurance that statements made about the economy and employment be made here, so that hon. members could question the Prime Minister or the relevant minister.

Unfortunately, I am called upon, now, to rise on a question of privilege because I was, quite frankly, astounded at the remarks of the government House leader when he indicated that now the government apparently is taking the position that it does not like the way in which one of the procedures of the House operates. In this regard, he seems to reflect on the judgment of the Chair with respect to the relevance and the importance of matters which are raised in terms of responses on motions and questions which are asked.

I am disturbed and offended that the government House leader takes the position, on behalf of the government, that major statements will not be made in the House because that