

Point of Order

I was informed by the table that, yes, there was a motion but that information about it was embargoed by the people who had given it to the table. I was told that I would have to see it in the Order Paper this morning.

That decision in this specific instance makes it impossible for us without unanimous consent to have a vote tomorrow. It is a confidence motion. It requires 48 hours' notice. As the person responsible as a House officer, I was not allowed to have the 48 hours' notice that obviously the New Democratic Party seemed to have, and which I suggest perhaps the Official Opposition had.

I requested it from the table. I was told that the party that had presented the motion had embargoed that information and it could not be given to me. Therefore, there was a clear intent in this specific instance—and it does not deal with the general case—that, clearly, as the government whip, I did not have 48 hours' notice and therefore 48 hours of opportunity to inform my members of the possibility of a vote.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to come to the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands in a moment. I want to hear the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan first.

In trying to find a way through this matter, whatever the rules may or may not require I am puzzled at why there would be this embargo under these circumstances. What was the purpose of that?

Mr. Gauthier: Political, to embarrass the government.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I hope I can assist you in your deliberations on this matter. Part of the problem is that our House leader is not here today. We are having to rely on signals to the back to get some information to which we ourselves were not privy.

I have a couple of points of clarification, if I may, Mr. Speaker. The assistant to the House leader of the New Democratic Party advised the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader at approximately 6.45 last night of the fact that the motion was to be votable. In attendance at that discussion was the government House leader's assistant, Mr. MacKenzie. We clearly did what

we felt was appropriate in terms of advising the government of our intention.

It would seem that the government is suggesting that there should be two sets of rules. One is for the government in terms of the amount of notice the opposition will get as to what day shall be a supply day and whether or not it is votable. The second is that we should have a longer period to advise the government that it is going to be votable. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to review that particular aspect.

• (1150)

I am also advised that we did indicate to the table that it be embargoed. I do not want anyone to think that the table took it upon itself to put in place the embargo. However, we did provide the government with the text of the motion on Tuesday of this week. I am advised that the government had full knowledge of the content of the motion. It knew, irrespective of the point of order raised by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, of the number of allotted days and whether or not there were two votable days between now and Monday and that there was a good chance we would use our right to have a votable motion.

The other point I would like to make is with regard to the special order last fall. I took part in the negotiations, having filled in for the House leader at that time. I would ask that you, Sir, check the actual wording to see whether the motion was worded in such a way that it was notwithstanding any special or standing order. I believe there was a caveat stating that this was a one-time situation and that we covered ourselves in that regard. However, I do not have a copy of it in front of me.

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate very much the help I am receiving from the hon. member. Does anyone have a copy of that special order? Could it be brought to the table?

I am fully cognizant, as your servant, that this is a procedural matter and I must deal with it as such. I want to be absolutely sure in my own mind about this. Did or did not the government know last night? There seems to be a conflict of facts here. I want it to be straightened out.