

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

● (2032)

We agreed to this and you once recognized that government members had the same privilege as those who sit on your left to introduce motions under Standing Order 43. I have nothing to say against this. We are all parliamentarians, and I am convinced that government members have the best intentions in the world if they decide to move motions under the provisions of this Standing Order when they consider that it is in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, like many others I have often wondered why it is that the Speaker rejects a motion and says that there is no agreement when we, at the other end of the House, have not heard the “no” of the member who opposes the motion. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that I have often raised this point, and I rely on your conscience as the Speaker of this House. I accept your decisions and do not criticize them, but since we have an opportunity this evening to discuss this matter, I want to say that I agree with my colleague for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), who spoke earlier quite honestly and frankly and said that the one who opposes introduction of the motion should have the courage to rise and identify himself, so that the public will know that someone does not agree. We could perhaps consider this matter further, but I believe that eventually—and the sooner the better—we shall need a specific interpretation on this point so that the Speaker will not be put in a difficult situation. I understand that it is not always easy to preside over the proceedings of this House, and I have always respected the rulings of the Speaker. But since we are discussing this matter tonight, I believe that Mr. Speaker has wanted to show generosity towards parliamentarians and allow them to express themselves on this matter so that we shall agree on a procedure which will be acceptable to all parliamentarians.

Mr. Speaker, I was struck by something that the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) said when he stated that government members do not have the opportunity to reply to motions introduced by members on your left. I am in total disagreement, Mr. Speaker, because when you accept a motion under Standing Order 43, every member in this House has an opportunity to be heard. And I do not feel it is quite acceptable that you appear to grant preference to hon. members on your left only, because when you find that that motion was not opposed when put forward, when debated, every member had an opportunity to be heard.

Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way these last ten years or so. We accepted as a *fait accompli* that government members may put questions to minister during question period. I remember in the beginning this met with tremendous opposition. Indeed we tried by every means at our disposal, and I supported this personally, to prevent parliamentary secretaries from putting questions to their ministers. There should be a darned end somewhere—they are continuously—

An hon. Member: Discrimination!

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Well, now! That may be the hon. member's view, but I should be given a chance to express my views, and then we shall see. I cannot accept as flowing from common sense that an hon. member, a parliamentary secretary may put questions to his minister in this House, when that same member spent the morning with him. This has all the appearances of a gimmick set up for promotion's sake.

Mr. Speaker, particularly since we have had television in this House it seems like certain members—and I do take the responsibility for what I am saying, as I indeed always do, as General de Gaulle would say—

An hon. Member: Was he a separatist?

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): —no, he was the president of his country, but he was not a separatist. I am a member of parliament for my country and I am not a separatist; I am a citizen of my country, a representative of my fellow countrymen in this House, and I want to express myself freely. Mr. Speaker, I would not want people to be left with the impression that there are a lot of people in the House when a minister rises to explain the nature of his bill, and members from the other end of the House move in like bees to sit behind the minister and give people the impression that the House is full of members. At that point, Mr. Speaker, if the cameras were to turn to the other seats in the House the viewers would be in for a surprise. I can uphold my opinions even if members are making a lot of noise. I am used to it.

I would like to say this, that as genuine democrats we should act openly, sit down seriously at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization and discuss whether Standing Order 43 should somehow be amended so we can use it more effectively to consider issues that arise, as that happened today. But, Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to be able to say to the minister in charge of urban affairs how much I shared the opinion he expressed at five o'clock.

An hon. Member: He is not here.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): It does not matter, I am paying tribute to him, and he will be told about it. He is the one who said that when—

An hon. Member: We do not make errands!

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): You do not make errands, and I hope you will not make errors either!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): You are free to interpret that as you want.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Urban Affairs said that when a member of parliament moves a motion for discussion under the provisions of Standing Order 43 then he should have the privilege of asking the same minister a question on the same