

Point of Order—Mr. Wenman

MR. YOUNG—ANSWER OF MINISTER RESPECTING DIOXIN LEVELS

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege arises from the response of the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts) to my question today in which he stated that dioxin levels in Lake Ontario had declined. On October 30, 1981, as reported at page 12347 of *Hansard*, the minister, in response to a question from the hon. member for Kitchener (Mr. Lang), said:

—there are, indeed, recent indications of detection of higher levels of dioxin in the Great Lakes.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe the hon. member does not have a question of privilege. He is obviously debating the question. There are differences of view as to the facts, but that is part of debate. I cannot hear his comments under a question of privilege.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. WENMAN—REQUEST THAT PETITION BE READ BY CLERK

Mr. Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Madam Speaker, the practice and procedure of the House of Commons provide that we have question period, and immediately after question period we go to the Speaker's report. The Speaker reports and we deal with points of order that relate to the Speaker's report and then we move immediately to privilege. That was the procedure followed today.

I am suggesting that my point of order in fact relates to the Speaker's report and, therefore, I wanted to place the question at that time. I will, therefore, proceed at this time, but I would hope that in the future this is the course that will be followed.

At this point I would ask Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The order in which deliberations are related in *Hansard* is the order in which they are heard. I am now hearing the hon. member and his comments will appear in *Hansard* at this point.

Mr. Wenman: Madam Speaker, my point of order is that I would now ask the indulgence of Madam Speaker to allow the Clerk of the House to read the private member's public petition that has now been ruled in order and which is standing in my name as of yesterday.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member requires unanimous consent for the Clerk of the House to read the petition. Does the House give unanimous consent?

Mr. Nielsen: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker. I respectfully submit to you that unanimous consent of the House is not required in order to have a petition read. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that the Chair has a discretion to

grant that permission in order to have a discussion of the matter to which the hon. member is speaking.

Mr. Wenman: Madam Speaker, it is 67(8).

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, if I might—would you activate my microphone? I want to say something.

I have proven my point then.

Madam Speaker: There is a quotation from Beauchesne that has guided the Chair:

Petitions are not read at length in the House, unless by special consent.

It has been the custom of this House that only through unanimous consent has the Chair allowed the Clerk at the Table to read a petition. The hon. member referred to my discretion. I shall read to the hon. member Standing Order 67(8):

No debate shall be permitted on the report but a petition referred to therein may be read by the Clerk of the House at the Table, if required; or if it complain of some present personal grievance requiring an immediate remedy, the matter contained therein may be brought into immediate discussion.

If I recall, the matter referred to in the petition concerned a matter which, if I am to use my discretion, I would say need not be dealt with in such an urgent fashion as to take precedence over the normal business of the House. As I said to the hon. member when he raised the question of privilege previously, under Standing Order 67(8) we could, on several occasions, have urgent debate as is permitted under Standing Order 26.

● (1530)

In order to differentiate between the meaning and intent of the two Standing Orders, it must be quite clear to the Chair that the matter is so urgent as to take precedence over the normal business of the House. As several petitions were presented to the House dealing with the matter dealt with in the petition presented by the hon. member for Fraser Valley West, I do not feel I could determine that the matter is so urgent that we must hear it and have discussion on it now.

Mr. Wenman: Madam Speaker quoted two precedents. The issue at hand is whether or not the petition shall be read at this point. The precedents you quoted indicated that petitions are not read "at length". In other words, petitions may be read, possibly not by unanimous consent. If one wants to read them at length and expand upon them, it is not allowed because that would be "at length". Otherwise, either a simple majority or the discretion of the Speaker would in fact apply.

The second precedent to which Madam Speaker referred related to Standing Order 26. There is a very important difference between Standing Order 26 and a private member's public petition. I am speaking now of an order and of a vehicle which is open to private members. It is extremely important to protect the rights of private members in the House. This instrument of petition is the only almost direct, representative