

Business of the House

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1530)

Mr. Clark: To accept what the government House leader is asking the Chair to do is to undo an act which had already been carried through to completion by the filing of the notice well in advance of the change of view, for whatever reason, of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I would just like to correct one thing for the record. I had already risen and was certainly at least three quarters through what I had to say when the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition rose to ask for the floor.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton was rising and I decided at that point that I would rule on this particular question for the reason which I gave, that these debates should take place among the House leaders of the different parties.

As hon. members can see, there is a danger in dragging the Speaker into those discussions.

The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has brought forth some arguments—of course, I cannot go back on my own ruling or comment on my own ruling—but they do not change the situation in any way—

Mr. Clark: Of course they do.

Madam Speaker: I do maintain what I have said.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I would not want it to remain on the record that I was raising this very serious matter on the basis of what should have been taking place in meetings of House leaders. I raised a valid point of order based on the Order Paper itself, based on the appearance of the notice—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Nielsen:—based on the timing of the filing and, indeed, I quoted the Standing Orders. That was one of the most serious points of order that has been raised so far in this session.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Nielsen: It is not the subject matter of meetings of House leaders. The subject matter here is the protection of the rights of the opposition to which it is entitled under the Standing Orders. That was the question.

Madam Speaker: That is quite clear. The hon. member raised a point with regard to Standing Orders and that is why I ruled on it. Otherwise, I would not have ruled on what might have taken place among the House leaders.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to what the government House leader said and, I think, more important, to what the Leader of the Opposition had to say about the rights of the opposition in Parliament. Before I continue with a few observations about the point of order, all I want to say is that there are not only the rights of the opposition in the Parliament of Canada, there are also the rights of the minority in opposition in the Parliament of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: I notice some members of the Conservative party agreeing with that.

It was my hope that your ruling, Madam Speaker, would be accepted because you are the Speaker of the House. You have interpreted the rules strictly, as I certainly understand them, but I want to speak to the point of order in question which was raised since your ruling.

An hon. Member: It has already been ruled on.

Mr. Broadbent: I would say very clearly that it is indeed the right of the official opposition to decide on the allocation of opposition days. However, the House leader of the Conservative party knows very well that throughout the existence of opposition days, the tradition has been that when days are allotted to the NDP—and this was the clear understanding of the New Democratic Party—there is no attempt by the official opposition subsequently to change that.

I will not elaborate on that in great detail, Madam Speaker, but I had direct conversations with the Leader of the Official Opposition and he knows that as of last night my clear understanding was that the name of the New Democratic Party would be on the opposition motion moved on Friday. Subsequent to that time, the official opposition has talked nobly about the rights of the opposition. I can only say that it has tried to deny the right of the minority by withdrawing, for the first time in Parliamentary history, the minority's right to have a motion in its name.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Nielsen: Why do you not cross the floor?

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, the House leader has made much of the news that they filed a motion at 1.12 p.m. I can say that they were informed before then that we were going ahead as an opposition party to file an important motion on the Crow rate in Canada. They knew that would be the subject matter. They knew we were going to do it, but they went ahead and proceeded with their own motion, trying to deny us our rights, and are now raising what I regard as a highly spurious battle in the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Jelinek: Cross the floor.