

petition is presented to the House and the appropriate Ministry is required under Standing Order 106(8) to respond to every petition referred to it within 45 days.

Surely, if we have written the rules as we have to require that the Government and the Ministry involved prepare a response and respond to the petitioners, that has nothing to do with when the House debates a particular law. It is a petitioner, a citizen of Canada, who has decided to sign a petition and to ask the Government for its reasoning with respect to certain matters. The Standing Orders require the Government to respond, which we have done.

I submit that it is an abuse of the process to infer that there are hundreds of names when there are not, and to suggest that there is any relationship between the petition and the debating of a certain law. That argument does not follow. If the reason for a petition is to beg the Government not to proceed with something, then surely that should take place in advance of discussing a particular Bill in the House. I think, with respect to my colleague's argument, that it does not hold water on that basis.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I rise again on the same point of order. I wish to apologize to the House if I in any way misled it when I said that there were something in the order of 27 names of people from Victoria on the petition. Only two of them have their addresses down as Victoria. I do not think that accurately represents those petitioners. If the Hon. Member is not going to take the time to read petitions and to see from where they come and learn to differentiate between Vancouver and Victoria, then he ought to ask someone else to table the petition on his behalf.

• (1120)

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I understand the embarrassment of the Member of Parliament for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) in not bringing some of those aspirations to the floor. I appreciate and know what the Hon. Member is feeling. I would ask him to look at those seven petitions, count up the number of petitioners from his constituency, together with those that I will be presenting this week. We will then see who is correct and what the numbers total. Perhaps the Hon. Member will have some meetings in his constituency office when he returns this weekend.

With respect to the arguments of the Minister of State (Mr. Lewis), he is quite correct when he states that the Government has 45 days to respond. That does not mean that the Government has to take 45 days; it has up to 45 days to respond.

However, if the Government was responsive and wished to react genuinely to some of the concerns and aspirations that we are tabling through the petitions of Canadians, obviously it would be appropriate for those responses to be tabled during the parliamentary debate at report stage on Bill C-55. We have heard from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration (Mr. Friesen), and the Minister of State for Immigration (Mr. Weiner). If they are in the Chamber and

look at the hundreds of people who have signed petitions, then I do not think it would be very responsible for the Minister of State to take the full 45 days.

Certainly, put together—an emotional debate during report stage and third reading, complemented with the aspirations of the petitioners—there is no reason why the Government would want to take 45 days. Obviously the Government must look at the petitions and say, "Look, Mr. Minister, there seems to be some widely-held concerns of Canadians from Victoria to Newfoundland".

Presenting petitions at the same time that we are debating is the fruition of democracy at work. If the Government is guided by a spirit of democracy then it would take those petitions very seriously, make the necessary changes in the legislation, and then we would have participatory democracy rather than ramming and jamming something through a committee on Bill C-84.

The organizations mentioned by the Hon. Member for Victoria had no possible chance of participating in Ottawa. That is why today the Senate is holding hearings. Some of the regional groups from Victoria and eastern Canada will now be able to attend at committee and participate rather than having a committee hearing witnesses from Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. Canada is much larger than that. We are giving that opportunity in the Senate to the organizations from Victoria.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) has a helpful suggestion. Perhaps Mr. Speaker should rule that petitions be submitted only at the time the subject of those petitions is being debated in the House, and at no other time. That may help us.

Mr. Gauthier: Tell that to the petitioners.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Chair can comment that there are times when helpful suggestions are given that may have another purpose.

The Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I was not planning to enter this interchange, but the latest interjection by the Hon. Member for Surrey—White Rock—North Delta (Mr. Friesen) concerned me. There is a long list of ways that the present Government has muzzled Parliament. There is a long list of ways the Government has not enabled the people of Canada to be heard where it has cut off debate prematurely. I am concerned with the suggestion of the Hon. Member that we now muzzle petitioners. Canadians have the right to present their views before Parliament and before the Government.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you do not give any consideration to the suggestion by the Hon. Member for Surrey—