

Point of Order—Mr. S. Robinson

ently contradicts this, and were it to be the view of the French government, I would be in total agreement with the hon. member that it is for this country alone to settle the matter of its representation abroad, just as it is for Senegal and France to decide how they are going to be represented abroad. But for the time being, I repeat that I question the authenticity of the report, because it is contradictory in content. As far as I am concerned, I shall look no further than France's correct attitude, that it is not for France to comment on the matter of Quebec's representation.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

MR. ROBINSON (BURNABY)—TABLING OF CABINET DISCUSSION PAPERS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to the tabling on Monday of this week of two bills, C-45 and C-46. It has to do with the commitment made by the government some time ago when tabling Bill C-43, the freedom of information legislation. At that time the government indicated it would be prepared, in the spirit of Bill C-43, to table cabinet discussion papers at the time bills were to be tabled in this House. I believe that no such discussion papers were tabled in the House at the time Bills C-45 and C-46 were tabled.

Perhaps the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox) can confirm that the government does indeed plan to make public the discussion papers in question in line with the principles of the freedom of information legislation. Second, possibly the Secretary of State can indicate when the government will finally be prepared to bring this important bill before Parliament for second reading.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, in reply to the hon. member's question as to when we intend to proceed with Bill C-43, I have discussed the matter on several occasions with the government House leader and he would also like to proceed as soon as possible. Had the official opposition been a bit more co-operative in the last few days, we might have had second reading of this bill and referred the whole matter to the relevant committee, and this would have allowed us to make progress with regard to this piece of legislation which I personally consider crucial. The opposition House leader has not yet informed us how much time he wants to spend on the issue and how many speakers wish to take part in the debate. I remind the hon. member that when the opposition House leader introduced his bill in the House last year, all parties, including ours, which was in opposition at the time, agreed, in view of the importance and urgency of the bill, to have only one speaker from our side in order to ensure rapid progress on that piece of legislation. I certainly hope that the opposition House leader will soon come to the same type of agreement so

that we may make rapid progress in the consideration of this highly important bill.

● (1510)

[English]

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader looked across at me as the minister was speaking and raised his eyes heavenward in despair with respect to the answer that had just been given to a question that was not asked by the member. The hon. member put it clearly, and I think it is a perfectly supportable position that he put. He asked, where are these discussion papers in the spirit of freedom of information? That question was not answered. I am interested in the answer to that question. I do not know if there is any consultation over there at all, I am beginning to wonder. It may have escaped the hon. member that the freedom of information bill has been on the lips of the government House leader for a few days with respect to its priority. I understand it has priority today. I sometimes wonder why we did not bring it in with priority over some other legislation we have been dealing with. I wonder why freedom of information, some work with respect to the economy and a whole host of other areas, has not been given some priority by this government. They stand up now and say we have no agreement with the government as to how many speakers we are going to have. Why should we have agreements with the government? These bills come and go on their merits. The fact is that our Bill C-15 on freedom of information was so meritorious that the opposition themselves, and now the government, decided that one speaker would deal with the few defects that were there. I cannot guarantee that this bill is of that nature. I can guarantee it will have the debate that it deserves.

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I planned to rise on a different point of order, but perhaps I could relate my remarks to this subject first. To put it very simply, the order of business for the House for today, tomorrow and Friday has been determined. The order of business for next Tuesday and the rest of next week has been determined. Monday, which is a government day, is free. I suggest therefore that the order of business on Monday be the freedom of information bill. I am satisfied, on behalf of my party, and I think members to the right would agree, that if that bill is called on Monday it will be given second reading before the day is out. I hope the government will take that seriously.

I have another point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. member has another point of order I would appreciate if he would rise later on with respect to it. We will deal with this one if everyone agrees.

Mr. D. M. Collette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I do not mind if the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) disagrees with me or reflects upon what I say, but certainly I ask him