

opposite side, Members who are part of that large majority, to think of the implications of the executive branch of Government being able to get away with this. If it is able to get away with this on the question of abortion, we may see the same Government applying the same principle on any other important matter of concern in the future.

Therefore, I urge you, Your Honour, as the officer of this House, one of the highest officers of the land whose obligation is to preserve parliamentary democracy and everything it stands for, to think about the consequences of the Government being able to get away with this. I am convinced that you will say that the majority must have its rights, yes, but in a parliamentary democracy, fundamental to our notion of democracy is minority rights. If the Government proceeds with this, those rights will be trampled, and that, Sir, is not acceptable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, I will, of course, reserve my right to reply in detail to the very capable arguments of my opponents at the appropriate time. I am glad that you pointed out that there is an appropriate time for this to be dealt with.

We are very comfortable with our position, both procedurally and according to democratic principles. During my preparation for that, I will take counsel from the words of my hon. friend from Windsor West, not in this particular debate, but perhaps when he spoke in 1969 when the rules were changed by closure by the previous Liberal administration. I am sure there will be great comfort in the speeches of that time.

I want to point out two things and two things only.

Mr. Mazankowski: Where was parliamentary democracy at that time?

Mr. Broadbent: And what did you say in 1969?

Mr. Mazankowski: What did you say?

Mr. Nystrom: We were here for weeks at that time.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): We listened to you guys, let democracy rule.

Mr. Gauthier: We will bring the experts in, Nielsen and—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask Hon. Members to exercise the appropriate courtesies. For the most part, the Hon. House Leader for the Official Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party were given a careful and quiet hearing. I would ask that that be remembered.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I have two points. I want to point out to the House that there were ample consultations, and I thought reasonable consultations at the time, with the House Leaders of both Opposition Parties. Second, I want to point out that on the one hand, my hon. friend from Windsor West

Point of Order—Mr. H. Gray

says that there is no reference to a free vote in the motion and on the other hand, he says that the Government cannot dictate that there be a free vote on the motion. We are not. We are simply saying that in the vote on this motion, as a matter of Government policy, every Member on the Government benches will be free to vote according to his or her own conscience or according to the dictates of his or her own constituents.

I want to point out to the House that we have no difficulty, on a sensitive, moral issue such as abortion, with having a free vote. We have no difficulty with that whatsoever. We do not intend to politicize this issue.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cassidy: Don't be absurd.

Mr. Lewis: If the Opposition Parties feel that they must have a Party Whip on the vote, let them do so, but I say once again that there will be no Government Whip on this very sensitive issue. If the Opposition Parties wish one, that is their alternative. If the opposition Parties want to do that, that is their prerogative.

● (1140)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I welcome a procedural and political debate on this issue at the appropriate time and reserve my rights.

Mr. Speaker: I hope Hon. Members will co-operate with the Chair in that at the very beginning I said this is not the appropriate time for the Chair to rule. I took that position this morning after a very great deal of concentration on that particular point over the weekend. I ask Hon. Members to co-operate.

I thank first the Hon. Member for Windsor West for his helpful intervention, as well as the Hon. Member for Oshawa I also thank both opposition Members for co-operating with the Chair and keeping their remarks reasonably brief. I thank the Hon. Minister for doing the same. As I said, there may well be another time when this will be debated more extensively.

In the interests of all Hon. Members and the watching public, I want to recite just exactly what has been going on this morning. First, the motion complained of deals with the various options with respect to the abortion issue. It is not for the Chair to get into the substance of the motion in any way and I most clearly am not going to do so. However, speaking procedurally, notice was given of the motion last Friday. Under the rules of this House, after 48 hours have passed the motion is automatically transferred to what is called Government Orders. If one looks at today's proceedings, one will note that that motion is now Government Order No. 25 dated May 20, 1988. It will also be found on page 37 as well as one other