

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

the rules say we should go on to private members' business, we do it no matter what is before us. How he can turn around from that position and say that when we reach the point in the book where it says that at 2.15 we go to question period we do not need to follow the book, well, that is a kind of lawyers' logic that I do not quite understand!

An hon. Member: You don't like lawyers!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Forgive us if in our party, we are impressed by the fact that we have doubled the number of lawyers we have in our caucus.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): We have to defend ourselves against them!

Mr. Brewin: Your arithmetic is wrong.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My legal friend from Greenwood says my arithmetic is wrong. We had two until a couple of weeks ago—the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) and the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt). Now we have added the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Faour), and the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Rae). That makes four instead of just two.

Mrs. Holt: That is 25 per cent lawyers. Too many! You are in trouble!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Another voice being heard from! My lawyer friends got me off the track for a moment. But let me get back to it.

I think the statement made by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, which got him off the track, was his attempt to say that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization in 1968 did not overlook the matter. He was not on that committee. I was. I am one of those who must make the confession. As a member of the committee I say we did not solve the problem. We made provision for motions under Standing Order 43 but we did not consider what the effect of what 45(2) would be. So we got ourselves into a tight situation. Now I thoroughly agree with the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton and my friend from Timiskaming may have something to say on this and he will press the point very strongly. But once the House has decided, by consent, that a matter is to be debated, then the House ought to debate it. But just saying that the House ought to debate it does not solve the problem of what we do at 2.15. I think that's the one thing about Standing Order 43 on which the procedure committee should meet and do something. It should not change the rule. Let's not try to build the policing into the rule. But I do think we have to make a provision as to when a debate should take place if there has been consent and the motion is put.

There was an example just the other day. My hon. friend from Sault Ste. Marie presented a motion on Arts Day and got

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

consent for the motion to be put. The Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) got up and spoke until 2.15 p.m., and that ended debate for that day. It has now been transferred to government orders. It sits on the order paper, I think as No. 1 under government orders. Now how long is it going to sit there? It sits there until the government calls it. It might have been better to have called that today instead of this debate. It will sit there for the rest of this session.

I think we should solve this. We solved the problem of what to do about debate on motions to adopt a committee's report. That grew out of the flag debate back in 1964. But if a debate is allowed today, it goes under government orders and the government has the right to call it or not. But these private members' motions under Standing Order 43 which have been interrupted at 2.15 p.m. because the book says we have to go to question period, ought they to be at the mercy of the government House leader as to when they are called?

As I have said already—and perhaps I should wind this up now—I do not want to see the procedure committee trying to recast rule 43. I do not want us to try to write the policing mechanism into the rule. But I do think we should have a rule somewhere that specifies when the debate is to take place on a motion under Standing Order 43, once it has been allowed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, when listening to the minister presenting his argument at the outset of this debate I told myself that a government that fears criticism is a guilty government. The government House leader nearly lost his temper with the opposition for criticizing the government's administration through motions introduced under Standing Order 43 and using such motions to criticize the government. He is complaining about the government not having an opportunity then to answer those criticisms. Mr. Speaker, I think that if the government House leader wants to abolish Standing Order 43 because of the embarrassments it might cause the government, then maybe he should also consider abolishing the question period because it too tends to blame the government's administration and call for amendments to legislation and corrections in the government's administration.

Mr. Speaker, in his argumentation the government House leader blamed certain members of the opposition, particularly the leader of the New Democratic Party, for using Standing Order 43 to criticize the government's administrative failure. I think that at one time or another all opposition parties in this House have used that standing order to criticize the government. If we use Standing Order 43 to deal with matters of urgent necessity, it is because there is an urgency in a lot of areas of the government's administration because day in and day out we are able to see the government's administrative failure. We were able to see it right from the opening of this session because we had to deal with emergency legislation to provide for the resumption of postal services, emergency legislation to provide for the continuation of shipping, emergency legislation to provide the government with borrowing authority—three major pieces of emergency legislation we had to deal