

[Translation]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State, Small Businesses): Madam Speaker, I am aware that this is Christmas time, but the hon. member apparently looks upon the government as Merlin the Wizard, thinking that one of us will find the magic formula to solve all our problems under his pillow when getting up one morning. It is clear that the small business community in Canada is having serious difficulties because of the high interest rates.

As I indicated yesterday in the House, we are now completely reviewing all means available to small business to finance itself, in an effort to find and implement more adequate ways to help small businessmen cope with this difficult situation. For instance, we are considering possible amendments to the Small Businesses Loans Act that would include in the financing either the capital expenditures or part of the inventory costs. I have not yet received the findings of this review, Madam Speaker, and contrary to the hon. member's statement, present circumstances are not likely to improve because of such remarks.

[English]

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, does that mean, to ask the question very directly, that the minister is not planning to do anything over the next few months to provide some assistance to the small business community other than the small business development bond, which program expires at the end of March?

[Translation]

Mr. Lapointe (Charlevoix): Madam Speaker, had the hon. member listened to my reply instead of commenting while I was speaking, he would surely know that I did not say what he claims to be my answer.

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[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

MR. McMILLAN—PROCEDURE RESPECTING S.O. 43 MOTION

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, earlier today before question period I moved a motion under Standing Order 43 on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. That motion stressed that since the present government was elected some ten months ago on promises to manage the economy effectively, the cost of living in the Atlantic provinces has skyrocketed. The motion also pointed out that—

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. McMillan: Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. The motion also pointed out that unemployment jumped, that the CN Express services—

Point of Order—Mr. MacGuigan

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the hon. member please tell me what his point of order is? We heard the motion during the period reserved for motions under Standing Order 43. The hon. member is now asking to be heard on a point of order, and I would like to hear what it is.

Mr. McMillan: Madam Speaker, the motion, as you will recall, called on Liberal members of Parliament to urge the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) to take serious measures to redress the very critical economic problems in the Atlantic region. I have been assured by my colleagues that no member in our party voted against the motion.

An hon. Member: Order.

Mr. McMillan: My simple question to you, Madam Speaker, is this: since I have also been assured by members of the New Democratic Party that they did not vote against that motion, would you indicate to me, to my colleagues and to other interested members, who actually did express opposition to my motion, and from what direction any expression of opposition might have come?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Speaker determines from hearing the yeas and nays whether there is unanimous consent given to a motion moved under Standing Order 43. Those who say no to Standing Order 43 shall be nameless. The Speaker usually does not recognize who has said no or who has said yes. As a matter of fact I look right in front of me, but I use my two ears. I heard some noes, and I believe the Speaker is the final judge on that matter.

Mr. Paproski: Were they from your right or from your left, Madam Speaker?

MR. MACGUIGAN—CORRECTION OF ERRONEOUS STATEMENT

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I regret that I inadvertently misled the House yesterday afternoon in replying to a question from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) concerning U.S. representations with respect to the national energy program. After question period yesterday I learned that, in my absence abroad the previous week, the department did receive U.S. representations with respect to some aspects of the national energy program.

I can confirm that these representations were in the nature of comments and requests for clarification and that successful discussions have since taken place with U.S. officials which reassured them that the program will be implemented in accordance with Canada's international obligations and undertakings.