

Auditor General

House to make a motion without notice. The urgent circumstances are that it is unfortunately clear that this government is determined to destroy by both open and devious means the office of the Auditor General.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: Despite the cries of outrage from taxpayers and political commentators, Bill C-190 remains on the order paper even though it is offensive to all members of this party, other members of the House and 99 per cent of the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (2:30 p.m.)

Mr. Baldwin: However despicable this legislative bludgeoning of a parliamentary officer, it is almost equalled by the attack on his effectiveness through the deliberate red-circling and downgrading of his key staff members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The President of the Privy Council seeks the floor on a point of order.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I understand the importance of the Standing Order under which the hon. member seeks the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion and I have no objection to the debating material which he has imported into what ought to be an economical method of informing the House as to his intentions. Of course, the danger is that if debating material, charges against the government, argumentation and, at some points, hysterical outbursts are permitted under this procedural rule, it will be necessary for this side of the House to ask for an opportunity to reply.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: If it is to be admitted that debating material can be used and developed at this point, then fairness would require that members of the government should have an opportunity to reply in a similar way, debating equally. That is my point of order.

Some hon. Members: Then accept the motion.

Mr. Hees: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the minister has asked for a chance to debate this matter. All he has to do is give unanimous consent on that side of the House and he will get his debate right now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. member for Peace River wish to address the Chair on the point of order?

Mr. Baldwin: No, Mr. Speaker. I was just about ready to put the motion.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Speaker: I should like to refer to the point of order raised by the President of the Privy Council. Hon. members who were in the House yesterday will recall that in similar circumstances I did indicate that I thought Standing Order 43 should not make it possible for hon. members to debate the substance of the subject they had in mind. The Standing Order is clear enough. A procedure has evolved recently since Standing Order 26 was amended perhaps by hon. members resorting to a procedural form which had been used over the years under Standing Order 26. In view of the fact that Standing Order 43 does not provide for a rebuttal I think the point made by the President of the Privy Council is well taken when he says that debating material should not be presented to the House by an hon. member seeking leave to propose a motion under Standing Order 43. However, I assume the hon. member for Peace River is now coming to his motion.

Mr. Baldwin: I was simply attempting to come within the words which require that urgent and pressing reasons for putting the motion should be established.

It is almost equalled by the attack on his effectiveness by the deliberate red-circling and downgrading—

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Mr. Speaker: Order. I respectfully suggest that the hon. member proceed to the motion he has in mind as quickly as possible. I suggest to him that he cannot argue the substance of the matter at this time.

Mr. Baldwin: With all due respect, I am putting forward reasons why this motion should be placed before the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: The last sentence is: The Auditor General is thus hampered in recruiting and retaining the skilled employees essential to his task.

The motion I wish to move is as follows:

That the President of the Treasury Board no longer enjoys the confidence of the House, and the conspiracy against the office of the Auditor General must cease immediately, and measures more in accord with his right to scrutinize on behalf of the taxpayers substituted for Bill C-190.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member requires, of course, the unanimous consent of the House.

Mr. Hees: If you want a debate, say yes.

Mr. Speaker: I have to inquire whether there is unanimity which would allow the hon. member to put the motion.

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I sense there is not unanimity. The motion cannot be put.