

words of the rule. You, sir, ought to make that decision and ought to continue to make that decision.

What I should like the government to do is not to make the decision that unanimous consent ought to be rejected to all these motions before the motion ever has a chance to be considered by you on the one hand or even put before the House on the other hand. It is to that point that there could be some objection before this House or before the committee. The Standing Order is certainly not one to be abused. It ought not to be abused by any member of the House in advancing a motion under it and it ought not to be abused by any member of the House by rejecting the substance of the motion out of hand. If we are to direct our comments to anything with respect to this matter they ought to be directed to what I think is the impropriety that has occurred during this session particularly and other sessions that has brought Standing Order 43 into disrepute.

Standing Order 43 is one of the few instances where private members of the House—not opposition parties as such, not cabinet, not parliamentary secretaries but private members of the House—can bring to the attention of the House and the country matters of urgent and pressing necessity falling within the jurisdiction of the parliament of Canada. Because it is assumed that all such motions should not be put, the rule has fallen into disrepute. That should not have happened. I hope those considering this rule will bear in mind that it is necessary for private members of this House to have the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House in this manner matters of great concern to the member's constituency, region or the country as a whole.

● (1510)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the point raised by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Blais), I submit that it is not a valid point of order and that Your Honour should take no notice of it. The fact is that before Easter, 1975, the House and the Chair had a great deal of trouble with motions moved under Standing Order 43. There seemed to be no time limit for moving them; there was, admittedly, abuse and the occupant of the chair, both yourself and Mr. Speaker Lamoureux, encountered a good deal of difficulty.

The procedure and organization committee which recommended rule changes which came into effect after Easter, 1975, attempted to resolve the problem by putting in the orders of the day a time limit. Motions under Standing Order 43 can be moved only in the time between the end of prayers and 2.15 p.m. I submit that since that change was made, there has been little abuse. Your Honour on a number of occasions refused to put certain motions, because you felt they went beyond the rights of that particular opportunity. But when a member on the government side, who thinks that politics is all right on his side but not on this side, argues that we should have some discussion on the motions moved, he is intervening where he has no reason to intervene.

I submit members may stray a bit on occasion, but Your Honour stops them. On the other hand, you run into situations like those of today. My hon. friend from Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Hogan) knew he would not be recog-

nized in the question period and used Standing Order 43 to bring to the attention of the House the plight of persons in his constituency who have been burned out of their homes. If that is playing politics, if that is an abuse, I suggest my hon. friend opposite does not know what he is talking about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member opposite said no. I think that is politics at its worst. The hon. member of my party raised the issue. That was politics as it ought to be. I submit that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization did a good job when it resolved the problem before Easter, 1975. If I may say so—I hope I will not be misunderstood—Your Honour is policing the matter quite well. The hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais) should find other fields to farm.

Mr. Paproski: He needs a holiday.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order raised by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Blais) concerning Standing Order 43. This is a most important point. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) just stated, there has been a time when members could introduce an indefinite number of motions under Standing Order 43. This could be a very long process and made for unending debates. Therefore, Standing Order 43, was changed on a unanimous vote.

But as far as this party is concerned, Standing Order 43 was very often the only way to raise an urgent point, and explain our request or proposition. The government felt this was too lengthy, because in their view we always waste too much time. They would rather have no opposition, but it does not matter much anyway because they act as if they were alone.

Before Easter 1975, there was work to be done and it was decided 15 minutes would be allocated each day to motions under S.O. 43. The main result was fewer and fewer Social Credit members could raise urgent matters, because the 15 minutes were distributed among all opposition parties.

Something else happened at the same time, and I would appreciate it if the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council would listen, as we listened to him. There was a time when Liberal members put questions during the question period. Today, with the goodwill of almost everyone in this House, they are allowed to put questions. So, there has been a reduction of opposition opportunities under Standing Order 43, and at the same time the government overtook another portion of the question period, which should normally belong to opposition members.

I shared the views of those who favoured greater participation by the so-called government backbenchers. It has come to the point where we are now the target of the parliamentary secretary's irony for using Standing Order 43 on occasion, although I respectfully submit that often-times the Chair recognizes only one question by one member only in our group.