

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

The operation of the Standing Order has suffered greatly because its basic procedural purpose has been ignored regularly. Motions under this Standing Order must be of such urgency as to warrant asking the House to waive the normal notice requirement and to interrupt the normal order of business so that they can be considered. If a motion does not meet the criterion of urgency, it should be dealt with under the normal rules of the House by way of private members' motions, with 48 hours' notice. The result of the failure to observe the rule of urgency is that genuinely urgent matters which might deserve consideration are submerged or drowned in a flood of non-urgent, frivolous, and blatantly argumentative motions. This is a very troubling feature of these motions.

Let us consider, for example, the motion put by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) last Monday. He raised the question of social insurance numbers. That matter has been in the political atmosphere since 1965 at least, and it could hardly be described as an urgent and pressing matter. But within the preamble and within the motion itself there are a number of what I would regard as argumentative, unsubstantiated, and unfounded allegations.

● (1512)

The hon. member alleges that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) is actively encouraging the expanded use of social insurance numbers by all levels of government, contrary to longstanding commitments by the Government of Canada. These are points of view with which we disagree. I have no objection to the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar stating his views on this point—views with which I and other members of the House disagree—but when do we have an opportunity under this proceeding to say that we do not agree and that these are not the facts as we see them?

Within the motions and within the lengthy preambles all sorts of argumentation are contained, with no opportunity for hon. members on this side of the House to state the facts as they see them. I regard this as a very fundamental weakness of the present proceeding, that it is possible, under the guise of alleged urgency and pressing necessity, to put forward argument, debate and partisanship, all of which is quite acceptable provided there is an opportunity to deal with it by members of the House who disagree with the point of view that is stated.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: I ask hon. members to tell me where the urgent and pressing necessity is to be found in the motions put forward by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) on October 27, and by the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mr. Baker) on the same day, concerning trends in mortgages. Are these motions of such pressing necessity that the normal 48-hour notice should be waived? Obviously that is not so.

Also, take the disguised speeches that we hear from hon. members. Many motions go beyond the clear statement of urgency and they develop into detailed speeches. I ask hon.

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members to look at two of the most recent blatant examples, one put forward by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), in which he uses almost half a page of *Hansard* to put forward a carefully constructed speech under the guise of stating the urgency and pressing necessity. Or take, on the same day, the artistry—I can call it that—of the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) who included, in the preamble of his motion, probably as much constitutional argumentation as, or more than, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) could put together in a 20-minute speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: All this is done in the name of urgency and pressing necessity. They are disguised speeches.

Then there are the frivolous motions, and they are very entertaining, mostly from the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) who provides us with regular entertainment, his latest attempt being on October 19. I am sure he will be willing to concede that if this proceeding is a good one and if private members should have the opportunity to present motions, they should not waste that opportunity by putting forward frivolous motions.

Take the motions and the arguments which contain unfair allegations. Really I have reached, on my part, the end of my patience, and I believe I have an almost inexhaustible source of patience—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: —when it comes to suffering through the antics of members of the opposition. But my patience came to an end when the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings rose under Standing Order 43, as he said, asking:

That the government cease its present efforts to downgrade the role of the monarchy in Canada and, instead, give strong support to the Queen and the royal family as they carry out their duties with such dignity and effectiveness.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings asked for consent to put a motion instructing the government to cease its efforts to downgrade the monarchy. That was a patently false allegation—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: —as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has demonstrated on a number of occasions. I have no objections to the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings being unfair, as he was on that occasion. What I object to is the lack of opportunity we have on this side of the House to rise and say, "That is untrue." It is very important that that be said because, if it is not said, those who are reading *Hansard* and those who are watching the televised proceedings of the House might conclude from the silence on this side that we were really accepting the analysis of the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings.