

Supply

of their minority rights demanded that they be given a day in the second semester of Supply in order to ensure that an equitable distribution of Opposition Days be made in the then current calendar year. Having adopted that view and having thus altered the distribution of days in that period, the Chair must now consider the implications of that decision on the distribution of days for this year.

Both Parties on this side of the House are in agreement as to the ratio that should be used in calculating the distribution of Opposition Days. Roughly one-quarter of the members sitting on this side are members of the NDP. Thus, it follows that they should receive one-quarter of the available Opposition Days.

The Standing Orders provide for 25 days to be given over to the business of Supply in each year. Based upon the one-quarter and three-quarter ratio that I have outlined, the NDP is entitled to 6.25 days out of the total days available in each Supply year. As well, in each of the three periods of Supply two motions may be put to the House under the provisions of Standing Order 62(9). Standing Order 62(9) states that these two motions constitute motions of no confidence and provision is made for a vote to take place at the conclusion of debate on such motions.

Using the same ratio that applies to the general distribution of Opposition Days, it follows that the NDP is entitled to 1.5 of the six voting days that occur each year. Because it is impossible to divide these votes in this manner, the distribution of these motions must be worked out on a two-year basis whereby members of the NDP are entitled to put three votable motions before the House over a two-year period.

In order to be able to discuss in a rational manner the problem which confronts you today, Mr. Speaker, I took the time to review the distribution of Opposition Days over the life of this Parliament. I am in a position to provide you with some statistics which may be of use to you in reaching a decision on this matter.

In 1980, the Supply year was disrupted by the fact that Parliament was called into session after the date on which the first semester of Supply would normally commence. For that reason, the Parties agreed that the second semester would be expanded and that all of the Opposition Days that would ordinarily take place during the first semester would instead be allocated to the fall semester.

Even under the terms of this arrangement, only 18 out of the normal 25 days of Supply were allotted in 1980. Of those 18 days, the NDP was given four days, one of which terminated in a vote. That year, members of the NDP did not complain because they did not receive their normal allocation of days. At that time members of the NDP understood that the distribution of days related not to the calendar year but to the Supply year. Not surprisingly, the records indicate that the NDP received an additional two days in the final Supply period of the 1980-81 fiscal year.

In the next Supply year, the NDP received seven Opposition days, two of which terminated in votes. In the 1982-83 Supply

year, the NDP received six Opposition days, two of which again terminated in votes. In the 1983-84 Supply year, the NDP received seven Opposition Days and two of those motions came to a vote. Thus, over the past four years of Supply, the NDP have received 26 of the 100 Opposition Days and have had seven of those motions come to a vote. In other words, although members of the NDP constitute only 25 per cent of all Opposition Members, they have received 26 per cent of the Opposition Days and over 29 per cent of the motions filed under Standing Order 62(9).

• (1115)

However, the Chair for some reason determined last November that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition would not be entitled to receive the day which they asked for at that time on the basis of a calculation of the distribution of Opposition Days. The Chair decided that the NDP argument concerning distribution of Opposition Days by calendar year was valid.

Therefore, we have gone out of our way to ensure that we are meeting our obligations by both standards. Not only did we provide the NDP with more than the number of days which constituted their minimum entitlement in last year of supply, but we have already given five days to the NDP in this calendar year. No matter how they slice it, the NDP has been receiving the days to which they are entitled.

Furthermore, we have been prepared to be even more generous in our distribution of Opposition Days. My predecessor offered the NDP four Opposition Days in a row in the last semester, all of which were refused. Since I have been House Leader I have offered the NDP another Opposition Day in this semester, which was refused. Still they complain that somehow we are being unfair in not allowing them an adequate opportunity with respect to Opposition Days. That is completely contrary to the facts. My Party and I have bent over backwards to offer the NDP ample opportunity to have Opposition Days, more than they are entitled to by the numbers.

Apparently today the NDP will stand before you, Mr. Speaker, and argue that they should be allowed to place their motion before the House. This would be the sixth time in this calendar year that the NDP would have had the opportunity to take over the debate on an Opposition Day. Based upon the NDP calculation with respect to the distribution of Opposition Days, they will have exhausted their full entitlement for the year before June 1. Therefore, if the Chair decides in their favour, it would demonstrate, in my estimation, that a minority of Opposition Members are able to exercise a disproportionate claim to precedence on Opposition Days, in that they want to have all their Opposition Days before June 1 of the calendar year, and on their own argument that they are entitled to only so many in a full calendar year.

The NDP cannot have their cake and eat it too. They should either calculate their entitlement on the basis of calendar years or on the basis of fiscal years. Equity demands that not only the rights of the minority be defended, but that the rights of the majority not be subverted by the actions of a few.