

The Chair consulted the McGrath Committee report of June 1985 which recommended this particular Standing Order to see whether any indication was given there of a possible restriction on the period of time between certification and presentation but could find no guidance.

[English]

To take the matter further, in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition Citation 691 states:

A Member cannot be compelled to present a petition. In a subsequent action, it was held that there is no right in a person desirous of petitioning the House to compel any Member to present his petition and that no action will lie against a Member for refusing to do so.

If there is no requirement that a Member present a petition, can there be a requirement that a petition should be presented within a specified period of time following certification? On March 23, 1987, the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) ably pointed out that various reasons might prevent a Member from presenting a certified petition expeditiously. I would suggest to Members that several months need not elapse between certification and presentation in most circumstances. However, I agree with the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) that the present Standing Order does not impose any specific restriction.

[Translation]

To address the second point raised by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary let me quote Standing Order 106(4) which states:

Any Member desiring to present a petition in his or her place in the House may do so on "Presenting Petitions—"

There is no specific mention here that the Member presenting the petition must be the Member who had it certified, or indeed that it must be the Member in whose riding the petitioners reside. There is no restriction stated in the Standing Order. It merely states "any member".

● (1520)

[English]

On a careful reading of the Standing Orders and a strict interpretation of those Standing Orders, I can find no requirement that the Member who has the petition certified must be the Member who presents it. In fact, as the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier pointed out, Beauchesne's Citations 689 and 690 specifically relate to Members presenting petitions for other Members.

However, because the current Standing Orders relating to petitions are provisional and have only been in force for a short time, and because the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure is in the process of considering the Standing Orders at the present time, it might be timely to suggest to members of this committee that they may wish to pay particular attention to the Standing Orders relating to the presentation of petitions, if as the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has contended, these particular Standing Orders are causing concern.

Supply

As these provisional Standing Orders are now written, I am unable to order that the Member who has a petition certified be the same Member who presents it to the House, nor can I define any time restriction for the period between the certification and the presentation of a petition.

I do, however, feel that the issues raised by the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary, are legitimate ones dealing with the fundamental right of every citizen to petition the House of Commons and to expect speedy redress. I would suggest to all Members that they give this issue their close attention. I thank Hon. Members for their representations.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 82—TAX REFORM—OPPOSITION TO FOOD TAX

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Cassidy:

That this House oppose any imposition of a federal tax on food and urge the Government to reject any such tax as part of its tax reform package.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a motion by the New Democratic Party which expresses the view of hundreds of thousands of Canadians who do not want the sales tax extended, and certainly do not want it applied to food.

This country has been governed by Liberal Governments for 50 of the last 60 years. During those years the tax system became increasingly unfair. In the last year for which we have figures, over 200 Canadians with incomes of \$250,000 or more paid no income tax. Many of the most profitable corporations in this country have paid no corporation taxes for years. Indeed, there is the recent example of the Gulf Canada purchase in which the purchasers were able to avoid payment of \$500 million in corporation taxes which they should have paid.

We realize today that we mistakenly believed the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) during the last election campaign to be sincere when he said he believed in a more fair and equitable tax system. Unfortunately, the record proves the exact opposite. Since the Government has been in office it has loaded increased taxes on ordinary citizens and has made it easier for those in the high income brackets and those wealthy corporations to pay even less than they did in the past.

On May 6, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) condemned the current sales tax regime as being flawed and inadequate. We agree with that. However, he went on to say that he wanted to replace the sales tax system with "a broad-based, multi-stage sales tax". This concept can mean virtually anything. It could mean that there will be a tax on almost all goods and services at all stages of production and development