

I will be back at the matter both with the President and the leadership of Congress to take actions that are not in any way doing Canada a favour. When the Americans are cleaning their environment and fulfilling their responsibilities to Canada as a neighbour, they are not doing us a favour; they are fulfilling their fundamental obligations to themselves.

Mr. Speaker: A short supplementary.

[Translation]

ACID RAIN—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I think that the Prime Minister is aware of the fact that, according to Gallup polls, the acid rain issue ranks now ahead of free trade as a major concern for all Canadian men and women.

Because he referred to the Congress of the United States, could the Prime Minister advise the House of the Federal Government's new strategy to convince the U.S. Congress to share Canada's views concerning acid rain? What argument is the Canadian Government going to use to try and convince its American counterpart?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will have a series of meetings with the leadership of the two U.S. political parties following the speech I am scheduled to make before that American Congress. We are going to pursue most vigorously all the initiatives, because we have supporters in the Congress. There are leaders among these two political formations there who actively support the Canadian Government's initiatives in this vital area.

I call the attention of my honourable friend to the fact that while preparing the speech I will make next Wednesday before the U.S. Congress, I looked at the last speech made by a Canadian Prime Minister before the U.S. Congress in 1977. I noted that in that major address the words "acid rain" are not even mentioned.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE DOCUMENT—SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I wish to report to the House on a point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

On March 28 and 29, 1988, the Hon. Member for Regina West raised a point of order contending that, in response to a question asked by the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris) during Question Period on March 28, the former Minister of Transport, now the Minister for International

Point of Order—Mr. Benjamin

Trade (Mr. Crosbie), cited a document when he referred to "CN's studies" and, therefore, that he should be required to table in the House the rationalization studies of Canadian National Railways the Moncton shops.

The Chair is appreciative of the arguments put forward by the Hon. Member for Regina West and the Minister's unequivocal response to the point of order.

The rule which guides the House and the Chair on this matter is very clear and precise. It is found on page 433 of *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*, Twentieth Edition, and repeated in Citation 327 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition, as follows:

A Minister of the Crown may not read or quote from a despatch or other state paper not before the House, unless he is prepared to lay it upon the Table. Similarly, it has been accepted that a document which has been cited by a Minister ought to be laid upon the Table of the House, if it can be done without injury to the public interest.

[Translation]

Beauchesne's citation goes even further:

The principle is so reasonable that it has not been contested; and when the objection has been made in time, it has been generally acquiesced in.

In fact, in their observations, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) and the Minister did not question the rule. They just raised the question as to whether the Minister had actually "quoted" from the "CN Studies", thus creating an obligation to table them, according to a recognized and accepted rule and tradition of the House.

[English]

The Hon. Member for Regina West very ably gave the House several definitions of the words "cite" and "quote" to substantiate his arguments. Though he was very convincing in his approach, the Chair must nevertheless refer to past practice and rulings in determining what interpretation has been given procedurally to those words. Essentially, as there is general acceptance of the rule itself, there is also general unanimity in the interpretation given over the years by various Speakers. For there to be an obligation on the Minister to table a document, it has to have been actually quoted from.

For example, on November 16, 1971, Speaker Lamoureux said as recorded at page 922 of the *House of Commons Journals*:

In fairness, looking at the matter as objectively as I can, I do not see how it is possible for the Chair to make a ruling at this point that a document that has simply been referred to but has not been directly quoted should be tabled in debate. I find it difficult to rule otherwise . . . If a document has been actually cited or quoted in debate by a Minister of the Crown, it has to be tabled. If only reference is made to it, I do not see how there is an obligation to table it.

Further, on April 8, 1976, as can be found at page 12612 of the *House of Commons Debates*, Speaker Jerome gave the same interpretation when he ruled that the obligation to table a document:

—certainly has never been held to apply to a situation in which a Minister has simply been asked a question about a document and given an answer.