

Oral Questions

Mr. Clark: Where is my copy?

Mr. Nielsen: Where is mine?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, he is the critic in this area. I have now obtained authorization to enable him even to show his copy to his colleagues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Democracy limps.

Mr. MacGuigan: This is a Bill which has not yet received first reading, Madam Speaker. The Hon. Member, I understand, has been discussing the content of it, as he was authorized to do, with his colleagues.

Mr. Clark: No, he was not. That is a falsehood.

Mr. MacGuigan: I think the question—well, I don't know whether he has discussed it with his colleagues, Madam Speaker. I cannot say. But I authorized him to discuss the subject matter with his colleagues.

Mr. Clark: You did not. That is a falsehood.

Mr. MacGuigan: And to come back and say whether or not they would be prepared to—

Miss MacDonald: You are making that up.

Mr. MacGuigan:—give the Bill second reading without debate, as the New Democratic Party has agreed to do.

REQUEST THAT BILL BE TABLED

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Madam Speaker, the obsequious response of the Minister only makes me understand that I will never again take his word on anything.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He is absolutely mistaken. He has misled the House on the facts. The fact of the matter is that some weeks ago when this matter was first raised—and the Minister knows this—I suggested in public and in the Committee that he immediately table this document—

Mr. Nielsen: This Bill.

Mr. Hnatyshyn:—this particular Bill. The Minister has neglected or refused to do this. Today the Prime Minister has received a telegram from the representatives of COPOH, the disabled group, indicating that they agree with the position we have taken, that the legislation should be tabled immediately, so that all Canadians, not just a certain select number, would be able to see the contents of the Bill. I ask the Minister again, will he not now, in a sense of fair play and respect for the disabled people and women in this country, table and give first reading to this Bill so we can get on with the business of dealing with it expeditiously?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I am at a loss to

understand what the hon. gentleman's grievance is. We are not introducing further legislation in this session. That is the basic—

Miss MacDonald: Why not?

Mr. MacGuigan:—policy at issue, because we want to complete the business which is before the House, and we hope that the Opposition will co-operate with us in doing that.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Who is the House Leader over there?

Mr. MacGuigan: I offered to the Hon. Member, as he well knows, if we could have second reading without debate, that this matter could go to Committee. I gave him a copy of the Bill so he could discuss the substance of it with his colleagues.

Mr. Clark: But not to show it to anyone.

Mr. MacGuigan: I do not know, Madam Speaker, whether he has discussed it with his colleagues. We do hear of more tumultuous happenings in the Conservative Caucus, and perhaps they have not been able to discuss this. But, Madam Speaker, we made an offer in good faith to the Opposition, and we would like to see them get on with this legislation.

• (1125)

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, as the Minister knows full well, that there was an embargo placed upon me against revealing any of the provisions of that Bill to anyone, let alone members of my caucus. He knows that, and he continues to persist in misleading this House. I simply want to say to the Minister that we have been waiting two and a half years now, and our Party need make no apology for our stand on behalf of the disabled and women of this country. We have stood for their rights and for progress in human rights legislation, and we will continue to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): What harm is there, Madam Speaker, in the poor beleaguered Minister simply taking 20 seconds of House time to table this Bill by way of first reading so that all Canadians can see precisely what the Government has on its mind?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I asked the Hon. Member not to show the Bill to his colleagues. I authorized him to discuss the contents with them. If the Opposition does not have confidence in its own critics, that is a problem for them, not for us. But it is a problem for the country and for the disabled if this Bill is not given speedy passage.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!