

Business of the House

Madam Speaker: I must explain to hon. members that while the Speaker is speaking, I do not think a point of order can be brought up. I will hear hon. members when I finish saying what I have begun to say.

Mr. Clark: Are you going to rule?

Madam Speaker: I have not ruled yet. I think at this point I have heard sufficient argument and the Standing Orders are sufficiently—

Mr. Clark: No, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nielsen: There is a point that has not been made. We have a right.

Mr. Clark: That is precisely the point I wish to address.

Madam Speaker: I am very sorry, but hon. members should understand that at any rate this whole debate should not have taken place in the House. I have heard arguments, twice on this side and once on the other side, and the Standing Orders are quite clear.

Mr. Nielsen: Twice on the other side.

Madam Speaker: I did not hear the minister twice, I only heard him once. At any rate, it is clear to me that I cannot be brought in to determine what is going to be the order of the day for next Friday. The government House leader has now determined what the order of the day will be for Friday, and that simply has to stand.

The notice on the Order Paper is just simply a notice. It is not an order. I heard shouts from the floor that this was an order. It was not an order, but simply a notice. Therefore, it is with regret—

An hon. Member: But you are.

Madam Speaker: If there had been two motions—

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, before you rule. Before you rule. Before you rule I have the right to be heard. Before you rule. I have the right to make an argument and be heard before you rule.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Order!

Madam Speaker: Order. I will be grateful if the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition will let me finish what I have to say.

Mr. Clark: Is it a ruling? Is it a ruling?

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I would like to finish what I have to say.

Mr. Clark: I have the right to be heard before you rule. Before you rule.

Madam Speaker: I have started my ruling. I cannot retreat on that. It is quite clear to me that I cannot intervene in

determining what the order of the day will be for next Friday. I recognize the right of the House leader of the government to determine the order of business for next Friday.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I sought your attention. I sought it in my capacity as the Leader of the Opposition and as an officer of this House of Commons to present to Your Honour a most relevant argument prior to Your Honour coming to a judgment. I regret that you chose not to allow the Leader of the Opposition, an officer of the House of Commons, to present an argument that had not been heard by the Chair prior to the Chair coming to the ruling. I am prepared to regard that as inadvertent.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clark: I am consequently prepared to assume that Madam Speaker will consider the relevant point that I want to make before she treats with finality the statement that she has just made from the Chair.

The point I wish to make is the following. There was a guarantee given—frequently, repeatedly—by the government House leader.

Mr. Pinard: Order. He is questioning your ruling, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Clark: That undertaking led to the publishing in the orders of the day of the order of business for tomorrow as being an allotted day. Acting on that understanding, the House leader of the official opposition filed a notice which perfected and completed the action set in train by the statements of the government House leader and by the publication in *Hansard* today. That was done, Madam Speaker. That action was completed, that consummation of the ordinance of tomorrow as an opposition day. That was done before the government House leader rose in the House of Commons to indicate that he had changed his mind.

The simple fact for Your Honour to consider is that the government House leader rose to indicate he had changed his mind too late because the notice was filed by the opposition House leader at 1.12 p.m. today, nearly two hours before the government House leader rose. That was a consummation of the act which he set in place by his guarantees, and which he cannot now unilaterally change.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: He gave us an undertaking. That undertaking was confirmed by the publication in *Hansard*. On the basis of that undertaking, we acted. We acted before he changed his mind. I submit to you, Your Honour, that you have no alternative but to protect the rights of the official opposition, which indeed are the rights of Parliament and of the people of Canada themselves.