

Statements by Ministers

As our House Leader said earlier, more than half of the three hours which could have been used for debate yesterday was taken up with questions of privilege. It is true that the questions of privilege were raised by the Opposition, but at least six members of the Government spoke on them. In addition, the Government used a portion of the three hours for Statements by Ministers. Opposition Members then presented petitions, which is a legitimate process, and then our House Leader moved that we proceed to Orders of the Day. Had that motion been accepted by the Government we would have had time to debate and vote on the Opposition motion. We made the attempt. The Government used as much time as the Opposition early in the day.

I think it is very important that the procedure which the Government has suggested not be allowed to take place. It is quite conceivable that on every opposition day the Government could take action to prevent the opposition Parties from using their allotted days. It is very important that the Government does not prevent allotted days from taking place.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, we have heard good arguments from both sides on this issue. When a question of privilege is raised which involves both sides, both sides should participate in debate on it. I think the argument on that issue should be viewed in that context.

Although I do not have the Standing Order in front of me, I believe that the time taken by a ministerial statement would have been added on to the time for debate on a votable motion. That ten-minute intervention should not be considered in your decision. The fact remains that it cannot be both ways. The Opposition cannot delay the Government's routine business and then say that by doing so they lost out on their opposition day.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few brief remarks. I do not think that fault should be taken into consideration in your ruling. The allotted day either took place or it did not. Your decision should not hinge on whether one Member or one Party of this House caused the debate not to take place.

Allow me to raise the following hypothesis. What would happen if the governing Party used dilatory procedures in order to delay or prevent the proceedings of an opposition day? Would that day be deemed to have taken place in any event? If such is the case, I submit that opposition days could come to an end as the Government could use various tactics in order to ensure that debate on opposition motions would not take place.

I submit that because we never got to Orders of the Day yesterday the debate did not take place. Had we reached the Orders of the Day for even five minutes, perhaps the spirit of the Standing Order would have been followed. However, because we did not arrive at Orders of the Day, I believe that the Government's contention that the allotted day took place is wrong.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank Hon. Members for their comments. I will have to defer my decision until later, at a more appropriate time.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 99(2) of the House of Commons, I rise to table in both official languages, the Government response to the report of the Special Joint Committee on Canada's International Relations.

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ENTERTAINMENT

PERFORMANCE BY ELMWOOD SCHOOL CHOIR

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in the interest of what might be called harmony in the precincts of Parliament, might I depart slightly from the rules and announce in a paternal way to my colleagues that the Elmwood School choir will be singing at noon in the rotunda of the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair is very interested to hear the announcement of the Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark). The Chair joins with him in inviting all Hon. Members to hear an outstanding choir. Perhaps the Chair can depart a little from the strictness of the rules by also advising the House that one of my daughters was a student at that school.

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CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO REPORT OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have just tabled a statement on Canada's international relations, responding to the report presented in June by the Special Joint Committee of the House and the other place. That caps an unprecedented exercise in participatory democracy in the development of Canadian foreign policy.