

Point of Order

I suggest to the member that he read the rules and look at the screen. The screen is in accord with the rules. This is another example of wasting the time of the House with a nonsensical point of order.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a short intervention. Methinks the opposition Whip protest too much.

The point of the hon. member for Skeena was that we have all come to accept the fact that the little digital clocks on the television screens indicate the time intervening until the vote. Otherwise, there would be no point in having it on the screen. I guess what we are saying is that from this point on, that clock and the time down to the vote is meaningless, irrelevant and should be struck from the television screens because it has, obviously, misled a number of members. That is the point the member for Skeena was trying to make. This is a legitimate point of order. The member wanted to vote against the GST and because of the Liberal-Conservative co-operation on this matter, he was unable to do so.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about this so-called point of order. The hon. member who raised it said it is a hybrid. I can think of another word to apply to it, but I do not think you will accept it as parliamentary.

I think that in so far as the hon. member wants some clarification of the significance of the digital clock on the screen, that is a question that should be clarified and he has received clarification. But I do not think that the government House Leader should, I am sure inadvertently, create the wrong impression about what the vote was all about.

It was not a vote against the GST or for the GST. The motion, as I understand it, was that the Liberal member for Ottawa South not be allowed to speak. The NDP moved that another member, other than the member for Ottawa South, be heard. The hon. member for Ottawa South had the floor and was on his feet to oppose the GST and was ready to speak for 20 minutes and then have a 10-minute question and answer period. The New Democrats got up and tried to muzzle him, tried to prevent him from speaking against the GST, and that is all that happened.

I conclude by saying that the point of order, or whatever you want to call it, deserves to be raised in terms of clarifying the use of the clock, but I do not think

it is correct for the New Democrats in their desperation over being left out of the debate on the GST, to try to misstate what the vote was about. It was about trying to prevent the member for Ottawa South from having his say against the GST.

I do not think NDP members will ever be able to explain why they tried to prevent a member of this House from opposing the GST if they are really against it.

• (1510)

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam in a moment.

I think perhaps it might be helpful to members and to the public to understand exactly what has taken place here.

The hon. member for Skeena has risen and explained to the Chair that watching the television set, which is available in the offices of all hon members, he noticed a vote was about to take place. There is for the convenience of members a digital clock that appears on the face of the television set. It is there for convenience only. I am prepared to certainly consider what might be done in order to make sure that no hon. member is misled by what the television screen shows.

However, I want to explain to hon. members and to the public, that when the bells ring, in most cases unless there has been some arrangement otherwise, they are either what is called a 15-minute bell or a 30-minute bell. There is also a long convention in this place that if the two Whips walk back in the Chamber and take their seats earlier than either 15 minutes or 30 minutes, then we are bound to proceed with the vote. Now that is a rule of the House and it is an old and long-time tradition.

The only thing that I am concerned about at the moment has nothing to do with why the bells rang. If hon. members are interested in why the bells rang or if members of political science classes or the public want to know why the bells rang, they can look at *Hansard* and see that a motion was moved. Upon that motion being moved, and it has been moved many times by all parties in this place upon occasion, there is a vote called.

It is not for me in listening to this point of order to comment whatsoever on the tactics used, the whys or the wherefores of it. What I am applying my mind to is solely