

Point of Order—Mr. Blais
SUPPLY AND SERVICES

LOCKHEED CONTRACT—INQUIRY WHETHER MINISTER ASSURED BY NATIONAL DEFENCE BY DECEMBER 2 OF FINANCIAL CAPACITY TO HANDLE

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Supply and Services and I am sorry I was not able to ask it while he was in his seat. I appreciate the minister returning to his seat. My question is designed to try to elucidate events that occurred on December 1 or 2. At page 14106 of *Hansard* the Minister of Supply and Services said that the Department of National Defence "assured me that problem could be solved and the financing was assured". Later, in answer to the hon. member for Victoria at page 14153, the minister indicated that the Department of National Defence "gave no indication whatsoever that it could not meet its financial obligations". What is unclear is whether there was a concrete undertaking given by the Department of National Defence as to the financial capacity of that department on this matter. I wonder if the Minister of Supply and Services could tell the House specifically whether information was given to him on that date by his colleague, the Minister of National Defence or by officials of that department. If so, could he tell the House specifically what that information was or was all that happened that the Department of National Defence did not draw attention to the fact of some financing problems? Was there a specific undertaking and if so, what was it and who gave it?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, as I often said to the House, the questions of financing are obviously the responsibility of the Department of National Defence. As for me, I carried out my mandate according to my obligations, that is to say DND had given the assurance they would look after the financing.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Presenting Reports from Standing or Special Committees.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, a question of privilege. In reply to my supplementary question the Prime Minister today indicated that he thought I was being ungentlemanly in asking such a question. As I know the Prime Minister only gives such rude answers when he is frustrated and does not want to answer the question, I want him to know that I completely forgive his rudeness in making such an ungentlemanly remark.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, it never would have crossed my mind to suggest that the hon. gentleman was not a gentleman. That would be a non-tautology; on the contrary I know he is a gentleman. The fact that struck me is that perhaps he is more of a country gentleman than a business gentleman. Any gentleman engaged in business of any size knows that there are hundreds of millions of dollars of transactions that go on every day on verbal assurances without any contractual writing. This is something that the hon. gentleman does not seem to know about.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to Standing Order 43. I am sure Your Honour has noted as

[Mr. Whelan.]

other hon. members have, that the practice has developed whereby members of the opposition have been using motions under Standing Order 43 in order to attempt to make political points.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: I did say "attempt", Mr. Speaker. My intention would have been to rise at the time motions are presented in order to object except that I am mindful of Your Honour's previous statements regarding points of order during question period. The point I wish to make is that I do not believe that your rulings do affect motions under Standing Order 43. However, being a fair man—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: I would offer to hon. members opposite the full opportunity of debating the point because I am confident it is one on which Your Honour will rule in my favour. I would therefore invite Your Honour to perhaps set aside some time in the near future so that this matter can be seriously debated and discussed and a proper ruling made on it.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear my hon. friend characterize himself as a fair man.

An hon. Member: Just fair; that is all.

An hon. Member: He is the member who always says no to motions under Standing Order 43.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): He is not being unduly modest, Mr. Speaker. In any event, I think Standing Order 43 has never been used by us for any political purpose.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sharp: Not successfully.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Except, Mr. Speaker, when the dictates and circumstances of our country have required us to bring to the attention of the House the shortcomings of the government—which are legion—and important matters of public interest, the nature of which we would expect members of the House to consent to unanimously.

What is of concern to us, however, is that throughout this session there seems to be a presumption on the part of the government that all matters under Standing Order 43 ought not to be considered. In fact, when the history of this time is written the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais) will go down as having made his greatest parliamentary contribution by uttering the word "no" before the motion has been fully put to the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): As I recollect the way that motions made under Standing Order 43 have gone it seems to me that Your Honour has seen fit to indicate whether motions made under Standing Order 43 are in fact on a matter of "urgent and pressing necessity" to use the