

House, attempt to clear away routine proceedings before the calling of these matters because I would not like to create the impression of keeping the entire House waiting for them. However, it depends on the nature of them. If I have the consent of the hon. member for Greenwood, I will deal with routine proceedings and then call his question of privilege immediately as the next item following routine proceedings.

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, that is agreeable.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Roger Young (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MR. BREWIN—RAISING OF QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE POSTPONED

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, as Your Honour has said, I gave the Chair notice of a question of privilege which I wish to raise. It affects the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais), who is not in the House today. I happened to see him this morning, and he said he could not be in the House today. I therefore ask that the matter be stood over until tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: That is perfectly proper, and the hon. member can raise his question of privilege, having given the Chair notice, at a time when he and the Solicitor General are in the House, tomorrow if possible.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

MR. MACEachEN—OPERATION OF STANDING ORDER 43

Mr. Speaker: As I indicated, there has been agreement to proceed now with the discussion of the outstanding point of order regarding Standing Order 43.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, you will undoubtedly recall that on October 20 I raised a point of order on a motion which was attempted to be put before the House by the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees). I rose

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

on that occasion because it seemed to me that that that particular motion was an excellent example of the extent to which proceedings under Standing Order 43 had developed in the House of Commons. I use the word “developed” when I really mean the word “deteriorated.” I believe it is very appropriate to draw attention to the concerns which we on this side of the House feel with respect to the operation of Standing Order 43.

The history of the Standing Order is straightforward. It was first introduced in 1867. It was revised in 1927 by the addition of the requirement of urgency for seeking unanimous consent to put motions without prior notice. It is interesting to recall that until 1969 the rule was used sparingly, but following that year, for some inexplicable reason—maybe not so inexplicable—there suddenly developed in Canada a flood of urgent and pressing matters.

In 1975 the procedure committee decide to revise Standing Order 43 by providing a 15-minute limit, and the proceeding was placed before the question period. That recommendation of the procedure committee was concurred in without debate or amendment. As Your Honour has indicated, the time limit introduced in 1975 introduced a self-policing feature. Requests for unanimous consent under Standing Order 43 cannot take more than 15 minutes, and presumably hon. members are encouraged by their colleagues to restrict their motions to genuinely urgent matters, and not to waste time with frivolous motions.

The theory that Standing Order 43 motions are restricted to genuinely urgent matters because of the limited time period has not proved valid. All the 15-minute period has policed is the period itself, and it has had little affect on what happens within that period. I believe that the content of the motions now proposed requires critical attention on the part of members of the House and, with due respect, of the Chair as well.

It is not my intention to limit the use of Standing Order 43. Fifteen minutes are set aside for private members to use this proceeding, and as far as I am concerned it can be used to the maximum. What I am concerned about is the misuse of Standing Order 43. When hon. members rise under Standing Order 43, they are asking the House to waive the normal requirement for 48 hours' notice to put motions before the House, on the ground that the matters involved are of pressing and urgent necessity.

The first requirement is that a matter must be so urgent and so pressing that the House will waive notice, and the motion can be put before the House with consent. I submit that the rule has not been used properly because hon. members have ignored the requirement of urgency. They have misused the rule by delivering speeches in the guise of lengthy preambles and lengthy motions. They have misused the rule by proposing frivolous motions. I can give examples.

Hon. members have misused the rule by making unsubstantiated allegations which cannot be replied to without debate, which is not normally possible and which, if it were possible, would waste valuable time of the House which could otherwise be used for public business.