

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 31, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Mr. Speaker: Before calling the order for the day, the Chair notes that there are two orders on the Order Paper and would be prepared to hear argument before making a decision.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, since we seem to go through this situation periodically, and having reviewed some of the precedents, I am prepared to argue this matter and to assure you that it has always been my intention as House Leader of this Party to ensure that the NDP is given adequate opportunity—in fact, we have bent over backwards—to have more than its share of allotted days. It must have something to do with their philosophy, which goes something like this: What is mine is mine and what is yours is mine.

However, the tradition that has been established is that we possibly get some indication of Your Honour's preliminary inclination, rather than have what happened the last time. I have a presentation I would like to make which I believe substantiates very much our entitlement to proceed today on the Opposition motion filed by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty).

Mr. Speaker: If that is the wish of the House, the Chair is quite prepared to make some observations of a preliminary nature.

It appears that there are three supply periods which provide for 25 allotted days, six of which can end in a vote of non-confidence in the Government. In the current parliamentary calendar, the Progressive Conservative Party has used 18 allotted days, five of which have ended in a vote. The NDP have used five designated days, none of which has ended in a vote.

The preliminary inclination of the Chair would be to choose the motion in the name of the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy), but the Chair is prepared to hear argument.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I will address myself to this matter. We have a situation where you will be required, pursuant to Standing Order 62(4)(c), to select the motion to be debated by the House today. The last time the Chair was obliged to make such a decision was on November 22, 1983.

Before you make your final ruling on the motions that are before us today, it might be useful if I review a couple of the issues that were raised at that time.

One point of view that was expressed last November was that the Chair pay some attention to the time in which the motions were filed with the Table in order to determine the order of precedence. The Acting Speaker, at page 29061, ruled that the time of filing was not the major factor in determining which motion should be put to the House. Indeed, the House Leader of the NDP argued that the time of filing should not be considered at all. His remark to that effect will be found at page 29060 of *Hansard* for that day.

Another interesting point that was made that day was that the NDP felt that the distribution of Opposition Days should be calculated on the basis of the calendar year. While both Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the NDP are of the view that equity demands that Opposition Days be distributed on the basis of Party representation in the House, the Official Opposition was and is of the view that this distribution of days should be calculated on the basis of the year of supply.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the first semester of Supply takes place in the period ending June 30 each year. It is in that semester that the Main Estimates for the fiscal year are considered by Parliament. In the subsequent two semesters, Supplementary Estimates are the Business of Supply that is to be considered by this House. Therefore, it is a specious argument to suggest that Opposition Days should be distributed according to calendar years. Such an argument could only be advanced by people who are ignorant of the meaning of Supply.

● (1110)

Nonetheless, it seems that on November 22, 1984, you will recall that members of the NDP were successful in convincing the occupant of the chair—

Mr. Speaker: Excuse me. The Hon. Member said November 22, 1984?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I am sorry, I intended to say 1983. Of course, on November 22, 1984, I will be sitting on the opposite side and not over here!

Mr. Deans: Not if the decision is made wisely.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: If the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) is waiting for an opportunity to demonstrate his intelligence, we may have to wait for a long time.

On November 22, 1983 members of the NDP were successful in convincing the occupant of the chair that the protection