

*Point of Order—Mr. H. Gray*

cumbersome solution to correct what is essentially a minor error or oversight.

Pursuant to Standing Order No. 1, I have reviewed the practice in the United Kingdom and in the Lok Sabha of India and found the following. At page 493 of the *Practice and Procedure of Parliament*, Third Edition, edited by Kaul and Shakdher it is stated:

No alteration can be made in a Bill as introduced or as reported by a Select or Joint Committee except by way of an amendment adopted in the House. However, the Speaker has the power to correct any obvious printing or clerical error at any stage of a Bill by issue of a corrigendum to the Bill.

In the Twentieth Edition of Erskine May at pages 377, 383 and 526 the Speaker of the House of Commons at Westminster is given considerable latitude in altering minor errors in motions and bills.

Therefore, I hereby order the Clerk of the House to alter the House copy of Bill C-37 as follows:

lines 11, 12 and 13 shall be struck from the Bill, line 10 shall be altered by adding a period after the words "December 30, 1986" and by striking out the word "and".

By doing this the incorrect tabling date and blank document number are removed from the Bill. However, that part of Subclause 2(3) which allows for recourse to the Memorandum of Understanding in interpreting the schedule remains. The alteration being made is therefore not one of substance but one which will correct the errors complained of. The Law Clerk and parliamentary Counsel shall also reprint the Bill accordingly, including an explanatory note referring to this ruling and the above-mentioned alterations ordered by the Chair.

• (1140)

This is not an innovation on the part of the Chair, for Speaker Jerome on April 23, 1975 ordered certain amendments made in committee, stripped from a Bill, and ordered a reprint of the Bill. Members may wish to consult *Hansard*, page 469 of that day.

In closing, I wish to add a few comments on clerical errors and oversights, for I do not necessarily take them to be of little significance. This error has been the subject of a full day's debate; it has now caused the reprint of a Bill at considerable expense. It has preoccupied Members on both sides of the House for several days, and has been of grave concern to your Speaker. No doubt this error will continue to be a point of some controversy. Let not those responsible for it be confident that in the future this ruling may be used to cure their mistakes. It is possible that a clerical error can affect the fundamental principles of fair play that govern parliamentary proceedings and debate. This ruling addresses the clerical error in Bill C-37 only. In future such clerical errors will have to be assessed with regard to their impact on the draft legislation before the House, and the consequences that will flow therefrom.

[Translation]

Let there be no misunderstanding. This kind of error can affect the rules of fair play that govern our proceedings. This

ruling corrects only the anomaly in Bill C-37. In future, such errors will have to be considered in terms of their impact on the proposed legislation before the House and the consequences that may result.

[English]

Accordingly, debate on the second reading of Bill C-37, as altered by the Speaker, will proceed.

I wish to thank all Hon. Members for their contribution to the debate on Friday, which the Chair took as extremely serious. I hope that the comments in this ruling will make it very clear that if mistakes are made this is not a ruling to be looked to with much comfort for the correction of those mistakes, and as a precedent it must be viewed in its most narrow and factual form.

Again, I thank all Hon. Members for their conduct during what was a very difficult question, a question that touches on the rights of all Members, and especially what must be accepted and understood in our parliamentary tradition, that the rules of procedure are very important to the conduct of this place.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may seek your guidance on a matter arising out of your very thoughtful and complete ruling.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray).

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is this. Since we do not have before us copies of Bill C-37 reprinted as directed by you in your ruling, would it not be more consistent with the appropriate operation of House business that debate on this Bill be deferred until we can have the Bill before us corrected as set forth in your ruling?

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Windsor West raises an important question to which the Chair gave some consideration last evening.

The practice is that the Bill is in the process, immediately upon my ruling, of being corrected at the table. Copies of the Bill as corrected in longhand are available to Members. That is a practice that has been followed in the past.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I have another question which I would like to put, with your indulgence.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, you have set out the authority you have with respect to correcting errors in Bills. Under the circumstances, would it be possible for you to use this authority to strike out the clause imposing the export tax on our softwood lumber going to the United States, because it is clearly an error on the part of the Government which is very harmful to the public interest, if it is perpetuated.