

Business of the House

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question refers to the matter of the royal commission on electoral reform.

As he knows, the commission will be tabling its document some time in January when the House is not sitting. In the document there will be draft legislation. I had asked him and the other House leaders earlier in the week to consider having pre-study of that legislation so that there would be more opportunity and more of a chance that the legislation would be in place for the next federal election. I am wondering if he has considered that item and had a chance to consult with the Prime Minister's Office, and whether the government would be willing to have pre-study of the draft legislation that will be included in the commission's report.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, legislation of this nature obviously needs the general support of all sides of the House and of all persons concerned.

In that regard the question of pre-study of the proposed legislation may be the appropriate way to go. I want to assure the member that we will have ample time to deal with it before it is necessary to introduce it prior to the next election.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, on two points of order, one following from the earlier question on the royal commission. As the hon. government House leader knows, I have written to him about the very discriminatory features of the Canada Elections Act as it applies to the raising of money by independents. We cannot receive the donations that registered parties can. This is a blight on the whole system and it is a real problem in the pocketbook. I really hope, knowing full well the time it takes to amend the Canada Elections Act, even with pre-study, that over the break the hon. government House leader will confer with other House leaders to try to remedy this with a simple amendment, as I suggested in my letter. Then it will not be necessary to start a court action and an injunction against all political donations until this matter is resolved. I say that seriously.

That is my first question. Frankly I thought the royal commission, and perhaps the government House leader has further information on this, was intending to file that

report in November. Perhaps he could indicate if he knows when it will be filed.

Since I was not able to get the Speaker's eye during Question Period, in a nice gesture of Christmas I would like to extend Christmas greetings to you and your staff on behalf of the independents, who happen to be the largest group in Canada at the present time. I was going to say that when I caught your eye. However, since I did not get your eye I will say it now. Now my second point.

Mr. Speaker: I can say to the member for Annapolis Valley—Hants that the reason he did not get my eye is that I knew he had several points. Please continue.

Mr. Nowlan: I have only one point left and it is a serious one. I know the Prime Minister has some other things on his mind, but since we all agree that confidence is rather important for the economy and the Constitution, is the government going to clarify this confusion and the Gilbert and Sullivan act of a Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies over this break, since a cabinet order is involved? If it cannot get it in order, scrub the whole thing right now.

Mr. Speaker: I think this is extending into Question Period. The hon. government House leader.

Mr. Andre: I hear the hon. member's representation respecting the question of tax deductions. As he knows, undoubtedly one of the questions the royal commission has been seized with is how to reconcile the kind of limits we have and the description of political contributions in terms of raising and spending within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, taking into consideration the fact that we now have experience that groups can apparently violate the Elections Act. All of those questions need to be considered, including the representation made by the hon. member.

However, I hope the hon. member is not saying that he represents all of those who say "none of the above" when people answer the question "what is your preference" in the polls.

Mr. Heap: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the unanimous consent of the House to introduce a petition since the order was out of order this morning.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Heap: I thank my hon. colleagues. This is a petition on behalf of families who have been separated—