

Point of Order

People can debate it. We will vote on it and see if we can live by our own record of decision.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg Transcona has made a valuable intervention. I would hope that the Chair would want to act upon that intervention as quickly as possible.

The government House leader has made reference to a motion which would be brought in, but in point of fact, Mr. Speaker, you already have the authority under the provisions of the Standing Order to act where you believe that the behaviour of members of Parliament on any side of this House is out of order. I would be happy to discuss with House leaders at any time, as would I am sure my colleague to the left, the substance of that particular motion and ways in which it might assist you in terms of how you exercise your responsibility as the arbitrator of this great Chamber.

Perhaps we could move on, Mr. Speaker, with a matter which we were told last night was of great urgency, namely the grain handlers dispute and perhaps hear from the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood. On the same point?

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the same point.

I listened with care to the words of the government House Leader and I agree with most of what he put forward, but I think that so often Canadians at large do not really see what goes on in this House and they do not understand that quite often there is a provocation that exists from the government side toward the opposition in terms of its approach to questions we ask. Quite often, at the same time, when we are giving answers there is also barracking and heckling on the government side.

In the member's approach this morning, he seemed to indicate that his own House was in order. I would suggest that sure, it is okay for us to maybe put some discipline into our side of the House, but he should not think that his organization could not stand some review itself.

Mr. Speaker: Just before I hear the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona, who has raised this matter, I think, in a very carefully structured way and within the rules, I will just respond momentarily to the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood.

Let me make it very clear to the hon. member and to all hon. members that having been here for many years, there is no particular monopoly of virtue on either side in this assembly when it comes to anything from heckling to something worse. But that is not the point. The point is that when decorum degenerates, it leads to further and further excess and it may very well be that both sexist remarks and racist remarks are a direct result of the state of decorum in general. It is very difficult to disengage completely the one kind of excess from the other.

The hon. member has talked about provocation. I do not think we need to have a House committee to remind ourselves that there often is provocation in this place and it comes on both sides. There has to be, of course, some common sense to our approach because this place has never been a tea party and strong-minded men and women who believe passionately in things are going to express that passion and conviction from time to time. But certainly I am prepared to try and assist along the lines expressed by the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona, the government House leader and the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond.

I will hear the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona. Perhaps he can be of further help to the Chair.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to delay things any more than I have to, but I do want to say that there is a distinction to be made between concerns that have been expressed for a long time and, most recently, in the Spicer commission, but by many other people about general matters of decorum in the House of Commons and what happened yesterday and a couple of weeks ago. There is a qualitative distinction to be made and I am not sure whether the government House leader simply did not understand my point of order or whether there is an attempt to bury a much more serious matter of how we deal with sexist and racist language in the question of the general decorum of the House.