

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

POINT OF ORDER

MR. MACEachEN—OPERATION OF STANDING ORDER 43

Mr. Speaker: In case there is any doubt as to what business we will be taking up at eight o'clock, it should be clear that although we are interrupting this point of order at five o'clock we will be returning to it at eight. We must interrupt this debate in order to proceed with private members' business, unless there is some disposition, by unanimous consent, to the contrary.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I understand there is not unanimous agreement to the contrary.

Incidentally, the difference which guides us in respect of returning to whatever business is before the House at this moment, when we do resume at eight o'clock this evening, is found in the language of Standing Order 15, which I will now recite to the House. It indicates, as hon. members will be aware:

● (1702)

(2) Not more than two minutes after the reading of prayers, the business of the House shall commence. Members, other than ministers of the Crown, may propose motions pursuant to Standing Order 43 at this time. Not later than 2.15 p.m. or 11.15 a.m., as the case may be, oral questions shall be taken up.

Here are the pertinent words:

At 3 p.m., or 12 noon, as the case may be—

In other words, at the conclusion of the question period.

—the House shall proceed to the ordinary daily routine of business, which shall be as follows:

In other words, the crisis comes not when we begin the question period, but when we finish it, because at the conclusion of the question period, by the operation of that Standing Order, the House is compelled to go to the business which is on the order paper. The fundamental difference between that and the situation we are in now—going to private members' hour at five o'clock as we are compelled to do by the standing orders—is that there is nothing which directs us in any way at eight o'clock this evening, other than the orders of the House that say that since we are on this business at five o'clock we must, of course, stay on it until we either adjourn that debate or adjourn the sitting for the day. Therefore, the two cases are fundamentally different. That is the reason why, if a motion made under Standing Order 43 happens to be on the floor of the House at the beginning of the question period, once we begin the question period we are locked in at the conclusion of it to proceed to other business. We cannot get back to that debate unless there is some procedural means for doing so.

It being five o'clock the House will now proceed to private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions.

[Mr. Speaker.]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

[Translation]

INCOME TAX ACT

AMENDMENT RESPECTING VOLUNTARY FIREMEN

Mr. Armand Caouette (Villeneuve) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending the Income Tax Act in order to exclude from taxable income all indemnities received by a voluntary fireman in the exercise of his duties, as well as to allow such firemen to deduct from their income all expenses incurred in the exercise of their duties.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is the second time this year I have had the opportunity to ask the House, as mentioned in my motion, and I quote:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of amending the Income Tax Act in order to exclude from taxable income all indemnities received by a voluntary fireman in the exercise of his duties, as well as to allow such firemen to deduct from their income all expenses incurred in the exercise of their duties.

Mr. Speaker, it is the second time this year that I have the opportunity to come back before the House with this motion. I had the opportunity to introduce this motion six months ago, and I have since received many letters and telegrams from all over the country in support of it. Part-time volunteer firemen would want to see it passed or at least referred to a committee for study, so they may come and show the need for that motion to be passed by the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, and as many people say, it takes a lot of courage to become a fireman and particularly a part-time volunteer fireman. But those who take it up on a voluntary basis must face many common dangers, financial, social and family problems.

Mr. Speaker, those who accept to become volunteer firemen certainly do not do so for the sake of glory. The municipality that cannot afford professional firemen must rely on the good citizenship of its people, so it is only normal that the government should do its share and help those courageous people, and particularly provide financial help for municipalities that face increasing financial problems.

The motion I introduced is designed so not to penalize financially those people who accept to become part-time volunteer firemen as well as their municipalities. It is true that those people receive a very small indemnity, but because it is an essential service, I would like it to be excluded from taxable income. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the law allows a deduction of some \$300. Such a deduction is clearly not enough these days. Those people need the help of parliament and the respect of the people and civic and government authorities.

Mr. Speaker, I referred earlier to the sacrifices that no one can deny. First, when a part-time fireman accepts to go out very early in the morning, sometimes even in unbearably cold weather, and fight a fire, I believe that it is worth considering.