

*Nelson River Power Development*

**Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen a situation develop in this house which allows members who purport to be leaders of parties, but which have no party basis in the house, to rise up and make statements on motions.

**Some hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Coates:** This is very important because it affects the privileges of every member of the house.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Coates:** When these members stand up and make statements on motions they are delaying the business of the house. One of them leads eight other members; the second leads four other members. We also have two independent members. If they preferred to join together in a formal party I should think one of them could stand up and also comment, and we could get into a position where another member belonging to a national party would have no opportunity to comment.

It is my belief, sir, that you should take this matter under advisement and indicate who should be permitted to reply on motions and who should not be able to reply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. When this point was raised, I believe about a week ago, I indicated that if the point of order were raised again I would give hon. members the opportunity to submit representations one way or the other, and that I would then take the matter under consideration. If other hon. members wish to submit argument on this point to enlighten the Chair on how to interpret standing order 15, I would be pleased to hear them at this time.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the wording of standing order 15(2a) under which we are operating is quite clear. It also seems to me that our practice in this matter is quite clear. The latter part of standing order 15(2a) reads:

A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition—

It does not say "a leader"; it says "a spokesman". Those words, including the word "opposition", are all in lower case letters, and there is no reference to the official opposition. It states:

A spokesman for each of the parties in opposition to the government may comment briefly, subject to the same limitation.

[Mr. Thompson.]

I suggest that in a number of ways this house has already recognized that there are four groups or parties in opposition to the government, and that it is perfectly proper that one spokesman for each of those parties in opposition to the government should speak on these motions if he wishes to do so.

I would point out to Your Honour and to the hon. member who has just spoken that this is a new rule, albeit provisional, which was adopted during the last parliament on the recommendation of a committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Speaker on which the same five parties now in the house were represented. When the rule was brought in it was understood that it was presented on behalf of the five parties then in the house, and throughout the last parliament at any time a spokesman for one of these parties wished to reply to one of these statements on motions Mr. Speaker allowed him to do so.

I should also point out that the wording of standing order 15(2a), at least the part that I have read, was actually taken from a ruling given by Mr. Speaker Michener. Up to that point it was just a ruling or citation listed in *Beauchesne*. When Mr. Michener was in the chair he sought to avoid the practice of having several people from each of the different parties speak, so he narrowed it to one spokesman for each party; and that dictum given by Mr. Speaker Michener was accordingly put into the rule when we drafted standing order 15(2a). I suggest that the practice of the last parliament is the one we should continue to follow in this parliament.

I have heard some of my friends to the right asking the question, how do we define parties? I submit, Mr. Speaker, that there is no such thing as an over-all definition of parties so far as the House of Commons is concerned. In the first place the names of the parties are not allowed on the ballot papers. We come here as individual members and our groupings are the result of our own arrangements. The only case where the word "party" appears, so far as the members of the House of Commons are concerned, is in the Senate and House of Commons Act where provision is made for an extra allowance to the leader of a party other than the government or the official opposition when that party has 12 or more members. But that, Mr. Speaker, and I assert it as strongly as I can, does not define a party. This is merely a definition for the purpose of that one piece of legislation, namely the Senate and House of Commons Act.