

[English]

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, lately the opposition has been experiencing great difficulty in posing questions to ministers because when they are in the House they are continually visiting with their colleagues. Some days you allow the minister a chance to return to his seat. Today I posed a question to the Minister of Transport but you did not allow him to return. I would strongly suggest to the Acting Prime Minister that he issue a directive to his ministers that when they are in the House during the question period, they stay in their seats. This will help speed-up the question period considerably.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

TENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Prosper Boulanger (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I, on behalf of all the members of my committee, have the honour to present the tenth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, in both official languages. If you will bear with me, Mr. Speaker, there was an amendment to clause 15 which says that this act shall be deemed to have come into effect on April 1, 1976.

[Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

* * *

● (1220)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

TABLING OF EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF MEETING OF COMMISSIONERS OF INTERNAL ECONOMY RESPECTING SALARY REVISIONS

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to lay on the table an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Commissioners of Internal Economy held on March 29, 1976, concerning salary revisions of the staff of the House of Commons.

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

MOTION RESPECTING COMPLETION OF DEBATE

On the order: March 31, 1976—The President of the Privy Council.

That, on Monday, April 5, 1976, the House shall continue to sit between 6.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m.;

That, on Tuesday, April 6, 1976, the House shall not adjourn until the completion of the business provided for in this order;

That, on the aforementioned days, no private members business shall be taken up;

That, on the aforementioned days, the business taken up shall be the consideration of objections to reports of Electoral Boundaries Commissions;

That all objections to any given report be considered at the same time;

Electoral Boundaries

That the objections or groups of objections, as the case may be, be considered in the order in which the objection or first objection in the group, as the case may be, was laid upon the Table; and

That during the consideration of any objection or group of objections, as the case may be, no member shall speak more than once, nor for more than twenty minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Yesterday the hon. member for Thunder Bay (Mr. Penner), supported by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik), raised a point of order about the possibility that the House might give consent, yesterday, to the consideration of this motion. I have carefully considered the point of order. Of course, the motion today is properly before the House without the need for unanimous consent. The hon. member argued that since this motion concerns itself with debate on objections to do with the reports of several provincial electoral boundaries commissions, and since, according to the argument, there has been a technical or legal failure, or non-conformity with the act on the part of the province of Ontario in that the filing of this report was not accompanied with reasons, the House ought not to deal with this motion. Indeed, as I understand the point of order, the House ought not to deal with any reports concerning themselves with Ontario when it debates the matter next Monday and Tuesday.

I have carefully considered the points raised. First, since this motion may now properly be called without needing unanimous consent, I feel that the point of order should not interpose itself in respect of the calling of the motion today and should not interpose itself with respect to our dealing with two reports, at least, pursuant to the terms of the motion if the motion is adopted.

My reasons for so finding are simple and clear. This House must concern itself with the procedures and practices of this House, not with other legal practices or questions concerning non-conformity with a statute unless those questions relate to the Standing Orders of the House.

The House has before it a motion. The Chair must, therefore, ask if the motion is procedurally correct and receivable. If the House takes a decision on the motion, then that is a decision for the House and ought not to be the concern of the Chair unless there is some procedural irregularity.

Questions to do with reasons attached to reports, or whether those reasons comply with the statute in the first instance in fulfilling statutory requirements, are surely legal questions. They concern legal opinions and are matters to be taken up in debate when the debate takes place. Further, if there is some question of a legal nature which in any way would prevent this House from taking legislative action, commissions from acting in a certain way, of officers thereof from implementing any decisions of commissions in drawing boundaries, that is a legal question.

Again, if remedies lie in the hands of hon. members who brought forward the point of order, or in the hands of any other citizens, then surely the question goes far beyond the procedural confines which are under the authority of the Chair. Therefore, on procedural grounds I must find the motion properly before the House and eligible for consideration at this time pursuant to our Standing Orders. If the motion is adopted, the House cannot be prevented, on procedural grounds, from discussing the matter on Monday and Tuesday next.