

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 13, 1979

The House met at 2 p.m.

● (1405)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

CALL FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LEGISLATION—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring forward a motion under the circumstances set out in Standing Order 43, the facts of which will appear.

Given the fact that three legislatures operating under the Westminster system have passed or are dealing with freedom of information laws, that the Council of Europe, representing some 20 European countries, is giving favourable consideration to similar proposals, and that the Canadian government stated nearly three years ago that it was giving priority to drafting legislation, and noting with concern the reluctance of the government to produce facts in response to requests during question period, or at all, I move:

That this House requests the government to forthwith table a bill to provide for open government and bring to an end the secret society which it has developed.

Mr. Speaker: Such a motion can be presented only with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE TO REVIEW RIGHTS AND IMMUNITIES OF MEMBERS—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, I rise on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity arising from the judgment of the Ontario Court of Appeal that members of the legislature of Ontario—and it applies equally to members of the House of Commons—must disclose the source of information that comes to them as confidential.

Most, if not all, hon. members have had the experience of individuals being prepared to give information that would

throw light on wrongdoing or some matter of public interest provided that they have the assurance that their names will not be revealed. If this court decision is upheld, it means that the wells of confidential information will be closed and information which would have been furnished will remain unrevealed. Therefore, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski):

That a special committee of the House of Commons, to consist of Mr. Speaker and seven other members to be named later, be appointed forthwith to review the rights and immunities of members of the House of Commons, and that the subject of confidentiality of information given to members of parliament shall receive the fullest consideration;

That the committee have power to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House of Commons;

That the committee have power to report from time to time, to send for persons, papers and records, and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee; and

That the papers and evidence received and taken on the subject in the first, second and third sessions of the thirtieth parliament be referred to the committee.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 43, such a motion can be presented at this time only with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Government members are afraid of what might have been revealed.

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IMMIGRATION

STATUS OF CHILEAN REFUGEES—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I rise, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity. It appears that a number of persons from Chile who have presently applied for convention refugee status in Canada will be deported to Chile, a country which the Department of Employment and Immigration has removed from the category of countries to which previously a person would not be forced to return.

● (1410)

Whereas the ad hoc committee of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights reports that Chile is still severely limited with respect to basic human rights and people continue to be arrested and tortured for political reasons, I