

*Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen*

took after the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) for bringing in frivolous motions, not just because my leader is not here today. He will be back shortly and can speak for himself. I think some of the frivolous motions brought under Standing Order 43 have made the point a lot better than some of the serious ones. If the government House leader is suggesting that we have to curtail our sense of humour around here, then I should like to have a little talk with him. I think a little more sense of humour might do us a great deal of good.

● (1602)

As for this debate today, there are one or two things I want to say first to clear the air. The government House leader several times talked about the 15-minute period. He did not say it just once. Five or six times he talked about that crucial, precious 15-minute period from two o'clock to 2.15. I remind him it is a seven-minute period, eight minutes at best.

The rule book states that motions can be made under Standing Order 43 starting not more than two minutes after the reading of prayers. It takes a while for the bell to ring in order to get a quorum. On many days the Speaker has to sit and wait until some ministers arrive so that he can say prayers. After all, who needs the prayers more than the ministers?

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

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The bell then rings again for more members to come in. We sit around. Finally, at 2.07 or 2.08 we get to motions under Standing Order 43.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I accept your point.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The minister says he accepts the point. Why then did he go out of his way to make out that somehow or other we had this 15-minute period, when he knows it is only seven or eight minutes?

Something else I want to say about the whole business of Standing Order 43 is that no parliamentary body can operate without a rule like Standing Order 43. I notice the government House leader has not proposed that it be abolished. As he said in his statement, it has been there under another number since the rules first started in 1867. That probably means they had it in the Assembly of the Province of Canada from 1841 to 1867, and probably had it in Lower Canada before that.

**An hon. Member:** Were you there then?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I will have to check. All that Standing Order 43 says is that with all of the strict and tight rules we have as to how things can get before this House, anybody with half an ounce of common sense knows there are times when something urgent will come up. If the House was tied by its strict rules and could not deal with anything new, we would be in a bad way. Therefore, we have the rule set out in Standing Order 43 which, as the minister says, has been there since the year 1.

I recognize right away that when it was put there it was for that purpose to which I have just alluded, namely, so that the

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

House is not tied by its own rules and prevented from dealing with something that is urgent. It was not put there as a device to give private members an extra opportunity to do something on the floor of the House. Incidentally, that has actually developed over the years. The minister said something to that effect, and the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) spelled it out at some length.

My friends across the way were teasing me a moment ago as to how long I have been here. I can say that in the first ten or 15 years I was here there was almost never a motion under Standing Order 43. If the government had something urgent, it just said so and got it by unanimous consent. It was not until a number of years in my experience here that members started putting motions under Standing Order 43. Why did they do it?

Limitations began to be imposed on the question period. Other things were cut out such as grievance procedures. Members reached the point where they were chafing at the bit to make their points. They could not get into the question period. They could not get their bills or resolutions discussed. Therefore we have Standing Order 43, and members use it precisely for that purpose. Frankly, I do not see anything wrong with that.

I do not see why the President of Privy Council thinks he is saying something high and mighty when he says these are part of a co-ordinated publicity effort. Members are using motions under Standing Order 43 to make their points. I do not know what the other parties do, but I know that my colleagues draft their own Standing Order 43 motions, and so do I. I was a little bit offended that when the minister quoted some examples today he did not quote any of mine. Are mine so perfect that he cannot find anything wrong with them?

**Mr. MacEachen:** They are pretty good.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Maybe he should have quoted them and given them as examples. That would have been better than this tirade against the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) and the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). At any rate, what are we doing here as members? We are here to express our points of view, to make our views known, to say the things we think ought to be said on behalf of the Canadian people.

If there are not opportunities to say those things in speeches because the debates are limited to certain subjects, and there are not opportunities to say them on supply motions because that is something else that was cut out, members grab these opportunities. It takes much less time than some of the other things we used to do. I think it is an improvement.

I remember the old days when we did not have the practice of using motions under Standing Order 43 and we did not have late shows. Members would make a note matters they wanted to raise. They would wait for the appropriate estimate in committee of supply, or wait for a grievance procedure at the end of the debate on a motion that Mr. Speaker leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of supply. We lost those procedures. They were taken away.