

Business of Supply

to such an extent that the privileges and the prerogatives of this house are in danger.

● (4:50 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether I could make a brief reference to the arguments that have been made. I would rather indicate a viewpoint on the other side of the matter. Not only is there no authority in Standing Order 58, as produced by the special committee on Procedure earlier this session, for a vote in this type of motion, but when one looks at Standing Order 58(4) one sees there is no authority for a notice of motion of the kind put forward by the hon. member for Peace River or the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

I draw Your Honour's attention to the most relevant portion of Standing Order 58 (4)(a). It reads:

Twenty-four hours' written notice shall be given of an opposition motion on an allotted day—

This is not the case here, in the view of hon. members opposite.

—or of a notice to oppose any item in the estimates.

For this purpose I take it the reference is also under Standing Order 58.

Mr. Baldwin: You take it wrong.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The hon. member for Peace River adds nothing to the discussion. The motions moved by the hon. member for Peace River and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre do not relate to any specific item in the estimates but rather offer a general comment. This is the first opportunity I have had to discuss and debate the matter and I would like to indicate my own viewpoint. In my view these motions are not receivable and for that reason we should not support these two motions if they come to a vote.

Standing Order 58 generally is a rather elaborate Standing Order, as you know, Mr. Speaker. Elaborate provision has been made for votes under certain circumstances and for not having votes under other circumstances. Since we did not provide in the committee for a vote, since we did not provide for this kind of motion in the first place, and since we did not stipulate a vote under the special order, we should stick within the strict rules of the Standing Order and not have a vote at this point.

[Mr. Matte.]

Mr. Aiken: I would like to make two comments, Mr. Speaker, on the motion being considered. A most ridiculous situation could arise if a motion were placed before the House of Commons, particularly of the type with which we are dealing which concurs with views expressed by a committee, without having the opinion of the house expressed in some manner. It might be possible that when the time allotted expired no vote would be taken but on the other hand, a vote might be required. In this instance the house is being tested on a substantive motion. I feel it would be contrary to all the precedents of parliamentary practice if a motion put on the order paper were moved, debated during the course of a day and then not put to the house and decided in some manner.

The second point I wish to make is that the President of the Privy Council has raised the point that this motion should not have been made, that there is no provision for a motion of this type in the rules and therefore it is out of order and should not even be considered, much less voted on. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that objection should have been made at the time the motion was moved and debate commenced. That time having passed, the motion should now be put to the house and considered. It would be contrary to all the rules of parliament merely to let it drop in the middle of a proceeding.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward by hon. members in connection with the interpretation of Standing Order 58 and the interpretation of the special order under which we are operating at the present time. I must say I agree with the general proposition advanced. What we have before us is a motion and that is the normal way for the house to consider its business. I believe also that this point of view has been advanced by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The House of Commons must consider its business by way of a motion being put, discussion on a motion and the eventual disposition of such a motion ordinarily is by a vote. It is only where circumstances are such that a Standing Order specifically states, for example in the case of Standing Order 26, that there should be no vote, that the house will not proceed to a disposition of the matter by way of a count or by a division.

Perhaps it would be easier to make a ruling in this case along the lines suggested by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin)