

Tabling of Documents

The President of the Privy Council is sucking and blowing at the same time. If he really wants to get to the business of dealing with the Patent Act, let him proceed.

The President of the Privy Council is also saying that his hands are tied, that this tyranny of the minority is blocking the Government from proceeding. I suggest that the President of the Privy Council and his Parliamentary Secretary should have another look at the Standing Orders. Quite clearly there is provision, if the Government wants to accept the political responsibility, for it to ram through the legislation and introduce closure; calling it what it really is instead of trying to bring it in through the back door. They could proceed, if they dared to do so. Despite the overwhelming majority of the people of Canada, they could proceed under Standing Order 57. That is an option with which they have chosen—and I might say quite understandably—not to proceed.

Finally, if Your Honour should overrule the precedent which has been established in that very important ruling of November 24 of last year, what would be the impact upon the rights of Members of the House? Effectively it would mean that the Government could rise at the beginning of Routine Proceedings each day under the first item of Tabling of Documents and move that we effectively proceed to Government Notices of Motions. What that would mean is that the presentation of petitions would be denied.

An Hon. Member: They can table them.

Mr. Robinson: What more fundamental right is there of Members of Parliament than the presentation of petitions? The Government would deny that right and in the process would overrule the ruling of Your Honour of November 24.

Someone from the other side of the House said that we can always table petitions, that Canadians would not be denied the right to petition the House because they can still table them; they do not have to be presented in the House.

However, there is another important element of Routine Proceedings, that is, the Introduction of Bills. At this time I have three very important Bills on the Order Paper. If the Government's attempt to bulldoze its way through to Government Notices of Motions is accepted today, it effectively means that Your Honour would be accepting a proposal to deny Private Members any opportunity to introduce Bills.

Mr. Althouse: And the draw is coming.

Mr. Robinson: As the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) has noted, the draw is coming this week for precedence in the Order Paper. Not only are Private Members thus denied the basic right to present Bills on matters of importance to their constituents and, indeed, to the country, they are denied the right to have the Bills included in the draw for precedence. Surely it is fundamentally unacceptable that this basic right of the presentation of Bills should be subverted in this way by the motion of the Parliamentary Secretary. One cannot introduce a Bill the way one can table a

petition in the House with the Clerk or with the Speaker. The only possible way of presenting a Bill is by presenting it in the House. Should Your Honour rule that the Government can simply skip all this, effectively that basic right of each individual Member of the House on both the government side and the opposition side is being denied.

For example, if the Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) should find that his two-month deadline to the Government has expired and the Government has not moved forward with conflict of interest legislation, and if that Hon. Member wished to present a Bill on conflict of interest, calling upon the Government to move forward in that area, the Government could say to him: "Not only are we going to kick you out as a Parliamentary Secretary and throw you out of the caucus, we won't even let you introduce a Bill in the House". That is the effect of this Government's attempt to railroad Parliament.

• (1200)

I would call upon Your Honour to recognize the long-standing precedent that has been established in this regard, to recognize the attempt by the Government to override the rights of private Members of this House. I would hope that in doing so Your Honour would recognize that this motion is entirely out of order.

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with considerable interest to the comments of my colleague from the New Democratic Party who was talking about getting thrown out of caucus, reprimands and what have you. I will leave it at that.

On the motion put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Lewis), I could not help but take note of some of the language used by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) in trying to defend the indefensible. He talked about opposition Members usurping and subverting. Such language is pretty harsh even for the alleged mild-mannered Deputy Prime Minister.

From a procedural and a substantive point of view it is my contention that the motion put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister is flawed. Some of the reasons have already been echoed and I will not go into them in great detail. It must be remembered by members on both sides that when the Parliamentary Secretary took the floor he was under the auspices, if you will, of Tabling of Documents. The member was on his feet for no other purpose but to table documents. As has been said by other members there is no debate at that point in time.

Second, superseding motions are referred to in Beauséjour's at page 151. The precondition for a superseding motion is that there be debate on the floor. There is no debate on the floor, Mr. Speaker. Again, you have the motion of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister pursuing a flawed procedural motion in my view.