

*Tabling of Documents*

a matter for a point of order. Therefore, as I say, I welcome the improvements we have made in the rules and I think this was a good one, but I plead that it be not abused.

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** I do not want to take the time of the house at any great length to belabour the point. I think everyone here will recognize that the rules were drawn up with the idea, in principle, of fairness to both sides of the house and to all hon. members. It is axiomatic that they should be used fairly. I need not go on to say that they should be interpreted fairly, because that is a matter of course. What I wish to emphasize is that they should be used fairly. I would point out that if this practice were to grow it would become commonplace for a minister merely to rise and table a document which touches upon the administrative responsibility of his department, and it would be admitted. It could be a contentious document. It could be a mendacious document. It could be any kind of document. No member of this house would be able to comment upon it. Yet it would be a matter of record. I would point out also that the document is not tabled at that very moment; the minister merely states he will be tabling it at some time. Then hon. members have to go and get a copy.

I would suggest to Your Honour that procedures are about to be initiated under which debate will not take place on certain stages of legislation. The practice to which I have referred would give an opportunity to a minister or his parliamentary secretary to put in a full statement or a full argument, which in effect would be his statement at that stage of debate, thereby gaining an unfair advantage over those in the house who cannot reply.

This is the only point I wish to make. Certainly, I agree with my hon. friend from Peace River and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that the spirit of the amendment was to eliminate unnecessary requests for leave to table a document, and that it should not be used as a general door for the funnelling on to the record of parliament by the ministry of any and all papers, at the discretion of ministers. I submit, therefore, that this rule must be interpreted narrowly, to the extent which has been indicated this afternoon.

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council):** I should like to deal with this point, since this is the first occasion the amendment to standing order 41(2) has come

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

before parliament. I might say it would have been useful—and perhaps the hon. member for Peace River might bear this in mind in future—if, when questions of privilege of this kind are raised for the first time, notice could be given, so that I might have an opportunity to look at the authorities—particularly, in this case, at the minutes of the Special Committee on Procedure.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I will table the next one.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Since the hon. member has not given me notice I shall have to proceed on the basis of my recollection, subject to confirmation after examining the minutes of the Special Committee on Procedure. I do recall quite definitely the question put to me by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre as to whether or not this encompassed press releases, and I indicated that in my opinion it did. I will do the hon. member the justice of saying that I do not recall what his response was, but I think he will agree he knew precisely the position we took. Perhaps other members of the committee can confirm this, but I cannot recall that the hon. member for Peace River said anything about it at that time.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Nonsense. On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I deny categorically—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. There is already one question of privilege before the house.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Rather than burden Your Honour with this we shall leave it to the record of the committee as to whether the hon. member did or did not; but I think you might dispel from your mind any suggestion that there has been some kind of trickery involved here. This is exactly the type of thing we had in contemplation when we brought about the change in the rule.

● (2:30 p.m.)

While standing order 41(1) is really quite precise as to the documents referred to, standing order 41(2) is in the broadest possible terms. It permits a minister or a parliamentary secretary to lay on the table of the house any report or other paper dealing with a matter coming within the administrative responsibilities of the government. I believe that the Chair should give the widest interpretation to those words. I also believe that it is in the interests of the house generally to have these documents, which deal with the