

One of the functions of the Speaker is to ensure that the House is able to transact its business. This does not mean that the Chair plays any part in assisting the Government in the management of its business agenda.

I do not know if I have the attention of the Chair but I will continue. The Speaker then said:

I want to repeat that; this does not mean that the Chair plays any part in assisting the Government in the management of its business agenda.

An Hon. Member: He just did.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): A Member has said that the Speaker just did. One thing which makes this suspicious is that Your Honour had a ready made ruling by a previous Speaker sort of handy, which comes as a surprise because this has never happened. Now, after we have had a pledge from the Speaker, the pledge I just read—and I do not know if I have Your Honour's attention but I would like to read it again— you said, Mr. Speaker, that the role of the Speaker is to ensure that the House is able to transact its business, and I quote:

This does not mean that the Chair plays any part in assisting the Government in the management of its business agenda.

I am not sure whether this is what you were trying to do, Mr. Speaker, but all I am saying is that you are treading on thin ice. As a Speaker whom we respected from the time you took that office this is probably the first occasion that the Official Opposition may have to disagree with one move you have made.

I would like the Chair to reflect on this. Meanwhile, my colleagues and I will not be attending the reception Your Honour is giving at the end of this day in protest.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, what we have heard from Hon. Members opposite is indeed quite unfortunate. I have heard, if not direct, at least indirect challenges to the Speaker's ruling. The Hon. Member who just spoke said that in his 19 years he can never recall such an action. Those Members have short memories, Mr. Speaker, because I recall very clearly when we were debating the Western Grain Transportation Act, more familiarly known as the Crow debate, we were engaged in this same kind of exercise. I got into a bit of a dispute with the Speaker at that time because I tried to be recognized on a point of order.

Mr. Nystrom: Have fun, Don.

Mr. Young: You can have the whole thing, Don. Debate it yourself.

Mr. Mazankowski: The then Minister, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy)—

Mr. Keeper: Call an election.

Mr. Mazankowski: —was seen by the Speaker, moved the motion and spoke.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mazankowski: I take exception, particularly, Mr. Speaker, to the comments from members opposite to the effect

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that the fix was in. If there was clearly any fix in, it was the deliberate actions of members opposite who were moving around during the course of the vote being taken deliberately attempting to interfere with the orderly process of the vote so that they could stand after and raise a question of privilege. In fact, two Liberal Members moved around quite freely and it was quite obvious it was deliberate because they are well-seasoned members, having been around here for a long period of time.

The Hon. Member for Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly) came in later, very deliberately. That was going to create an occasion where a point of order could be raised, to engage in more frivolous, dilatory tactics, which is really interfering with the orderly process of this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: It is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite cannot have it both ways. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. What we have seen today is a clear and deliberate attempt on the part of the Opposition to frustrate the orderly progress of this House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It might make it easier for the Chair, under not particularly easy circumstances, if all Hon. Members kept their remarks to themselves unless they want to stand and be recognized and put a motion through the Chair.

First, I have listened to admonishments from certain Members in the Chamber in the last few minutes directed toward the Chair. Those members are respected members of this place and members for whom I have a very high regard. I would, of course, consider those admonishments and hope that in due course, perhaps, the fervour of them might be somewhat muted. However, it is not unusual, at times when there are matters of considerable division in this place, that feelings run very high. As a consequence, it is always a possibility that the Chair can be in the centre of that cross-fire. I do not feel that I am that much different from any other Speaker, knowing that it can happen to me as it can happen to others. I hope that most of the time it will not happen.

● (1620)

It seems to me that what has irritated some Hon. Members and made them feel that the ordinary practices were not followed in this place is specifically the question of whether or not the Chair should have recognized the Minister. The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) indicated that it was not appropriate for the Minister to introduce this motion on "Motions", that it should have been introduced on "Government Notices of Motions". Time allocation motions have been moved under "Motions" since as long ago as 1971, as I am informed, so this is not something new.