

*Point of Order*

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, some positions are extremely difficult to defend, but in this case, the government's position is untenable. Yesterday, the government had an opportunity to designate today as an opposition day. It did not, because it was obsessed with imposing closure on a bill. They forgot that before adjournment of the House, they could have designated Thursday, March 22, as an opposition day, and possibly next Monday, since according to the Standing Orders, March 26 shall be the last opposition day, and they knew perfectly well we had an opposition day scheduled for that date.

I may remind the government and those who are in charge that designating an opposition day is their responsibility. However, they must comply with certain provisions of the Standing Orders. Although there was a special agreement last year because of exceptional circumstances, I may remind the House that Standing Order 81(8) reads as follows:

For the period ending not later than December 10, six sitting days shall be allotted to the business of supply.

• (1130)

Opposition days, in other words.

Nine additional days shall be allotted to the business of supply in the period ending not later than March 26.

Mr. Speaker, we then have ten days left. The text goes on to say:

Ten additional days shall be allotted to the business of supply in the period ending not later than June 30. These twenty-five days are to be designated as allotted days.

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of a standing order that says we must wait for the government to designate a day before it is allotted. If the government was negligent and failed to comply with the Standing Orders of the House, all I can say is that it's a lost cause. We in the Opposition knew you had to give us two opposition days by March 26. We knew yesterday was March 21. We also knew it was the New Democratic Party's turn, because we take turns taking opposition days. The two last days were coming up. Monday will be ours, because we operate two to one, on the basis of the number of members in each party. There are twice as many Liberals as New Democrats, so we have two days more than they do.

**Some hon. members:** Really!

**Mr. Gauthier:** Those are the facts. What can I say? It may be sad for some people but facts are facts..

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of a single standing order that could be used by the government whip, although I admit he put up a good defence, but just the same, it was not entirely convincing. I admit he defended his case, but not convincingly. We still have six votes. We had eight, but we only used two, so there are six left, and it is up to us to determine whether those days are votable or non-votable. I know today's Order Paper contains a motion in the name of Mr. Hovdebo, filed in the appropriate manner, which says:

Opposition motion for the Supply period ending March 26, 1990.

—which will be next, and pursuant to Standing Orders 81(14) and 81(12), it will be votable and is not deferrable. The vote cannot be deferred. The vote must take place tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing I or the government can do about it. The situation is quite straightforward, Mr. Speaker, and the Standing Orders are clear. I think the government will have to acknowledge they were sleeping on the job yesterday and failed to do what they notably should have done, which was to designate today as an opposition day. This morning, we thought about it, and we were saying: Maybe, considering the proviso under *Projected Order of Business* which reads "subject to change without notice", the government will change today's order to call Bill C-65 and decide to make this an opposition day. However, after some more thinkings we concluded it could not do that because otherwise it would have had to give notice yesterday. So I say to the government: It's just tough!, Too bad, but that's the way it is. They should have realized there is more to this game than closure and time allocation. Strategy is also part of it, but the government has been lacking in strategy, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

**Mr. Hawkes:** I rise on a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker.

I always appreciate the spirit with which my friend enters into debate. However, he seems to have forgotten that when we approached the table last evening for knowledge of whether or not notice had been given about the intention of a vote on Friday, we were informed that the motion which would appear on the