

Privilege

for consideration of the business of supply on the Order Paper.

The rule respecting debatable acceptability of motions is found in Standing Order 67(1)(p), as my friend from Ottawa—Vanier has already indicated. The words of the Standing Order are clear:

67.(1) The following motions are debatable:

(p) such other motion, made upon Routine Proceedings, as may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of its authority, the appointment or conduct of its officers, the management of its business,—

And the business of supply I submit, Your Honour, is a principal business of this House:

—the arrangement of its proceedings, the correctness of its records, the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that in the precedent, cited by my friend from Ottawa—Vanier, in 1917 in the course of the argument being advanced by the then hon. member for Saint John, the Speaker indicated that the motion to reinstate this particular bill on the Order Paper does not “permit of debate”. But I suggest to Your Honour that that matter was not argued before the Speaker at that time. He simply made the ruling in the course of argument. He did not hear argument on that point. He simply made the statement. I suggest that it is not a good precedent for dealing with this item.

I would acknowledge that at the beginning of a session the motion for designating an order for the business of supply is not normally debated, but under Standing Order 67(1)(p) I submit that it is a matter now, if it was not before, of management of the House business because the government is changing that motion. It has botched the business. It now has to reinstitute that business.

• (1610)

I suggest, therefore, this motion is debatable, and I hope when the government House leader moves it, he will afford us the opportunity to debate the motion before it is put to a vote in this House. I submit that the provisions of Standing Order 67, which specify which

motions are to be debatable, clearly cover this situation. I invite Your Honour to so rule.

I should also say in my submission that the government has, as indicated by my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier, blundered by its use of this quorum rule. It ought not to have proceeded in the way that it has. As a result, in my submission, it has lost the Opposition Day that was held, since the matter was not closed off and the motion was not determined.

That debate also, when the motion for reinstatement of the business of supply, if adopted by this House—I would not want to presume that because perhaps the Conservative members may not be here for that vote either—if it does not carry, I would invite Your Honour to put the motion that was under discussion on Friday and which was not adjourned back on the Order Paper under the business of supply as another Opposition Day so that we can proceed to discuss again that motion concerning the environment.

Perhaps on this occasion, the Minister of the Environment could be present to discuss that very important motion along with some of the other ministers of the Crown who were so conspicuously absent on Friday afternoon.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, I intend to be brief, but I want to be clear on events as I recall them.

I was present that day, and I am one of those who has his name on the sheet that is signed—a memorable occasion it was, indeed. Perhaps it will not happen for another 100 years. It was remarkable. It was even more remarkable to hear the government House leader's comments suggesting that the government was magnanimous in granting more time because it believed a part of the opposition was wasting time.

When my colleague, the member for Chambly, made the motion to extend the hours, government members argued against his motion but did not have enough members here to stop his motion from passing. So the House leader's attempt to rewrite history is not only futile, but it compounds the government's embarrassment. Far be it from me to contribute to that. What the government could have done, simply and in order, was to have any one of their back-benchers or the Whip stand up in his place during that debate and move adjournment of that debate.