

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

POINT OF ORDER

MR. MACEACHEN—OPERATION OF STANDING ORDER 43

The House resumed consideration of the point of order (Mr. MacEachen).

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I had no intention of becoming involved in what I would call needless debate, but I should like to register my concern about a few matters. We are talking about Standing Order 43 and, as the government House leader has said, the use, misuse and abuse of it.

How did this come about? It is very simple. I have been here over ten years and I have never heard such a tirade of objections, concerns and words to the effect that there has been misuse and abuse of Standing Order 43. The hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) moved a motion under Standing Order 43, and the government House leader took some exception to it, unquestionably a great deal of exception. He rose at a time when he should not have been on his feet in terms of a point of order. Seeing that there have been changes in the procedures of the House, I believe that points of order should be raised at three o'clock. But no, the government House leader was up and blasting away immediately after the presentation of the motion.

The motion came about because of Bill C-60. I do not know what the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings had in his mind, but he was concerned about the role of the monarchy in our parliamentary institution. Bill C-60 has concerned many people. The hon. member was concerned, as were government members. We have heard and read of their concern. The matter to which the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings referred was an urgent one.

I do not have to remind Your Honour of the wording of the motion, but I should like to refer to Standing Order 43 which reads as follows:

A motion may, in case of urgent and pressing necessity—

I look at the government House leader as I say these words. It continues:

—previously explained by the mover, be made by unanimous consent of the House without notice having been given under Standing Order 42.

Apparently Standing Order 42, to all intents and purposes, requires 48 hours' notice. The matter was urgent in the mind of the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings. He explained that it was a matter of necessity. Of course, there is a caveat that the motion should not be argumentative and that there should be no statement explaining the substance of the motion. Certainly we all agree with that.

I will not question the motives of the government House leader, because one cannot do that, but it seems to me that polls play a great part in his role at this particular time. There is a sense of desperation, fear and apprehension as to what the future may hold. Therefore, at every opportunity government

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members will rise and Raise Cain with the opposition. I listened to the government House leader when he referred to misuse and abuse of Standing Order 43, but I noted that he was extremely selective or perhaps forgetful. According to him, the only persons in the House who were abusing or misusing Standing Order 43 were those to the left of Mr. Speaker.

I notice that the minister sitting behind the government House leader is shaking her head. I will not mention her riding or portfolio because I do not want anyone to know to whom I am referring. But it is a fact that the government House leader referred to Conservative members exclusively. At no time did he indicate that his own members have misused and abused the rule. The only conclusion one could draw from his tirade was that members of the Conservative party were the guilty ones; we are with sin and they are without sin.

Mr. Reid: That is right. You have got it.

Mr. Alexander: I knew I would strike a chord. The hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) has said that I am right. When the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) jumped into the fray, the first thing he did was chastise my House leader, for play acting before the cameras. Then the hon. member for Ottawa West looked directly into the camera and started his little speech. One can see how facetious this argument becomes. Then the Acting Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) jumped to his feet and expressed concern about the comments of the hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mrs. Pigott) respecting Standing Order 43. Apparently he picked up a daily newspaper and found that his department was being criticized to no end.

What is the answer? The government House leader indicated that we were negligent. We are not negligent; he is the one who is negligent. He has sat there for as long as he has held this office without making any comment whatever regarding the prerequisites of Standing Order 43. When we started to talk about the Queen it hurt him, touched him or moved him, and he then wanted to give what he thinks is the true message to the Canadian people. That just does not wash.

● (2012)

What could members on that side have done? They could always have agreed to a Standing Order 43 motion if they wanted to get to the nitty-gritty of it in order to present an argument or a rebuttal. Have you noticed, Mr. Speaker, the pattern of behaviour of government members? They always say: "No, no, no". They do not want to know the truth and they do not want a debate. Now they find that by saying "no" they have precluded the possibility of debate, and they are now becoming concerned.

What else could hon. members on that side have done other than agreeing to a motion under Standing Order 43? At any time at 3 p.m. when an hon. member on this or on that side felt there had been an injustice as a result of a statement by another hon. member, he could rise on a point of order. Perhaps he could not debate the issue, but at least he could bring out what he felt was the truth. Do you, Mr. Speaker,