

Point of Order

I would ask you, Madam Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: If I may, I have listened very carefully to the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, to the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona and to the minister.

At that point in time in Question Period when the minister answered that the subject would be coming up for debate, as you know at any time the government can change whatever is being—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The government can change the Order of the Day. The Speaker could not know whether this had been changed for later on this afternoon so I could not in any way judge the hon. minister's answer.

On the other hand as the minister did say, and on this point I think we will all agree, a minister is not obliged to answer a question. But I do agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona and with the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam that Beauchesne's does say that when it is something that is to be debated later on in the same day, but I could not presume what would happen at the time.

I think tomorrow will be another day for Question Period. I would like us to proceed with the business before the House.

Mr. Murphy: I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is this on the same point of order?

Mr. Murphy: Yes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that all that can be said about it right now has been said.

Some hon. members: Point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I beg your pardon. I do not understand, even though this is St. Patrick's Day, the reason to scream at the Speaker. I will not allow this in the House. My respect for this House and for this institution is obviously higher than what some members would like it to be.

I will listen to the hon. member for Churchill, but I do hope that he will keep his voice down.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I apologize for shouting, but you had cut off debate. I think this is a very important item and I had stood quietly three times previously on it. In your last intervention you said that there was no way of knowing what was coming up today in debate.

• (1510)

In fact prior to the lunch break a House order was passed saying that we would be dealing with third reading of Bill C-13 on the environment. That was a House order agreed to by all the parties.

We knew that the question raised by the member from B.C. was completely in order. We know what questions we are going to ask during Question Period. We know what the issues of debate were. The member had a completely appropriate question. He made a request, which was to have the Speaker rule on whether or not an issue could be raised in the House. Just because there is a bill which may come up one month, two months or three months hence—

Mr. Althouse: Or never.

Mr. Murphy: —or never, as my colleague from Mackenzie said, does not mean that the minister can refuse to answer a question.

We have to be in a position to be able to ask questions. Just because there may be legislation or may not be legislation before this House should not prevent that from happening.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am quite ready to listen to members all afternoon if they want. What I do not understand from the hon. member for Churchill is that I did agree with him. I did say that Beauchesne's says that we cannot anticipate something which will be debated today. I admitted not knowing what was the subject to be debated after the vote this afternoon. I do apologize. I was not in front of my television set, nor was I in the House of Commons, when the motion was passed earlier today. I had some other business to attend to.

I did agree with the hon. member. I really do not see where we are going now and what are the benefits of going on with this point of order. I would much rather the House proceed with the vote as it is expected and then we go on to debate the third reading of Bill C-13.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to your