

Point of Order

• (1140)

While it may have been the intention of the framer of the rule to have it interpreted this way, it certainly has not been so interpreted in accordance with these four authorities. It certainly has not been interpreted that way during this Parliament since the election of 1988. Indeed in my experience the interpretation has been consistent with the authorities I have cited.

It seems to me that what the hon. member for Kamloops is asking the Chair to do is to change the interpretation of Standing Order 84(7) to make it at variance with the interpretation of all the other similarly worded rules in the Standing Orders without going through a change to the rule. I am not sure that such a change would in fact be agreeable to members of this House.

Speaking for the Opposition, I suggest that the consistent practice has been not to permit questions and comments following the unlimited speech times provided for in the rules or after the 40-minute speeches provided for in Standing Order 74 on second reading of a bill.

Given the consistent practice in that regard, I suggest that Your Honour ought to continue to follow that practice for the budget debate that will be starting presumably tomorrow, if not later today, depending upon when you consider it to have begun.

I would ask that Your Honour rule that there are no such question and comment periods following the unlimited times, and that if the hon. member for Kamloops wishes to pursue the matter further he should raise it with the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges, Procedure and Private Members' Business.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to spend a great deal of the time of the House in going through this point of order. I have listened with care to the arguments made by the hon. member for Kamloops and the member from Kingston.

I think most of the precedents, if not all of them, that I would have referred to in my argument have been covered. The precedents are very clear. Certainly the most recent precedents under which we have been

operating for the last five or six years are very clear that there is a pattern in this area. That pattern is that the first two speakers, those who are exempted from the 20-minute rule, are not subject to a question and comment period to follow that speech without the consent of the House.

There are two points that I wish to make in that regard. First, in looking at the Annotated Standing Orders we see that they are a summary of the Standing Orders with some explanatory notes. Those explanatory notes are a collection of experiences and applications of those particular Standing Orders. Reading from page 270 of the Annotated Standing Orders, we see that the last paragraph in the explanatory notes regarding Standing Order 84(7) states in part:

This section also provides for a 10-minute question and comment period, which has been interpreted to mean that no questions may be directed to the members who have been exempted from the 20-minute time limit.

The Annotated Standing Orders, which as I say are a summary not only of precedent but of practice, are very clear that the practices and methods we have used in the House on this question have very much set a pattern which says that there should not be questions after these two major speeches.

The second important point is that on looking through the precedents which have already been described it is very clear that the patterns and the habits which have been emerging are that in cases where this matter has come up there has been a request for unanimous consent.

I would argue that when there is a request for unanimous consent it is because the Standing Orders we are operating under do not provide for that particular action. In other words, we have to go outside those rules in order to accomplish what the particular individual would like to accomplish at that moment. That is why someone has to ask for unanimous consent.

That pattern has emerged so clearly over the years that it once again demonstrates very forcefully that Standing Order 84(7) does make it clear, has been interpreted as such, and has been practised as such that the Prime Minister and the first member speaking on behalf of the Opposition are exempted from the question and comment period.