

Oral Questions

May I put a question to the Minister of Communications. Point five of the minister's press release of October 21 states:

The government is now reviewing measures . . . aimed at making licenses for (earth) stations for TV reception easier to obtain—

Since the minister's crackdown on illegal dishes is aimed primarily at rural areas, can the minister tell the House how he can explain the CRTC shutdown order of Golden Cablevision situated in a remote, isolated mountainous area of British Columbia which has no other alternate means of reception? Further, will the minister postpone enforcement action until an alternate satellite package, as promised by the minister, is made available to inadequately served areas?

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. gentleman's question, I should like to point out that really there is no relationship at all between point five of the press release and the current enforcement action which has been initiated in various parts of the country. Point five of the statement referred to my desire and that of the Department of Communications to simplify the regulation and to cut through the red tape necessary for people who have a legitimate interest in obtaining licences for the operation of dish antennas.

So far as the Golden station is concerned, I would be pleased to look at the matter in greater detail. My understanding at this stage is that the cable company operating in Golden recently appeared in front of the CRTC for approval of a licence renewal application by the CRTC. In the process of approving the licence, the CRTC quite properly asked the cable company to cease and desist from receiving illegal television signals from an American satellite.

Mr. Rose: Speaking of illegality, Madam Speaker, since the minister's press release on Monday also suggested a combined network satellite TV package for remote communities, including CBC and CSN, and since the cable-owned CSN has yet to be issued a licence by the CRTC, has the minister yet come to a policy decision as to whether or not cable companies are broadcasters or merely carriers and should be subject to rate of return regulations just as any other carrier?

Mr. Fox: Madam Speaker, there seems to be a misunderstanding in the reading of the release. I mentioned a wrap-around package of the proceedings of the House of Commons which would include approximately 60 hours of programming from CTV and TVA, not CSN, using the Telesat satellites at present in operation in this country. We hope in that way, as an interim measure, to televise to the outlying remote areas of Canada, the underserved areas, some 60 hours of television a week, including full coverage from Friday night right through to Monday morning, and, of course, full coverage on certain nights during the week.

POINT OF ORDER

MR. BAKER (NEPEAN-CARLETON)—REQUEST FOR DEFERRAL OF SPEAKER'S RULINGS ON QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, if I may. I know that since yesterday you have been prepared—and indeed I asked you for it yesterday—to defer until today a ruling with respect to two points of privilege. However, I think that was before the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) gave notice of that odious motion, the purpose of which was to gag and restrict the right of Parliament to debate what is fundamental to our country.

Normally, Madam Speaker, I would have no right to ask you to do this again, but in view of the fact that this motion has intervened and that, in effect, this is the last day of debate, as surely it is the hon. member's intention to call it—the last day of these proceedings at any rate in the House—I wonder, Madam Speaker, whether you would mind deferring your judgment with respect to the questions of privilege so that even the truncated, shortened, gagged debate which is going to take place will not be interrupted by judgments on questions of privilege, however important they may be.

Madam Speaker: I accorded this courtesy to the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) yesterday. I saw no objections or any doubts about it, and I think I could delay my judgment until tomorrow. There is nothing which forces me to make the rulings today. Of course, the hon. member is not basing his request on any existing rule. It is left to the discretion of the Chair, and in accordance with the hon. member's request, I will defer those rulings.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, today is Thursday and I wonder if I might ask the government House leader his intention for the balance of this week and into next week. I have particularly in mind the fact that the government announced over one week ago that we would be dealing with the budget on the night of Tuesday. I assume the government has not changed its intention in that respect. I want to know about the budget debate, and the government's plans for tomorrow and for Monday.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier this week to my colleague, unless it is decided otherwise and on the hypothesis that motion No. 18 will be passed before 11 a.m. tomorrow, tomorrow and Monday will be opposition days. Tuesday afternoon, before the budget speech, we will proceed with consideration of Bill C-42 on the Canada Post Corporation, which is of great urgency. Tuesday evening, as