

Mr. Mazankowski: It is not becoming, John.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister wishes to table the document and has done so.

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PRIVILEGE

RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY MINISTER PRIOR TO INTRODUCTION IN HOUSE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Earlier today the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) called a press conference and provided detailed information regarding a Bill which had not yet been introduced in this House. In the information presented to journalists there was an indication that a Bill had been introduced. It went on to detail very specific amendments prior to any Member of Parliament having an opportunity to see the Bill and review its contents. I simply bring this to your attention and ask that you examine the information presented at the press conference to determine whether or not there has been a breach of the privileges of every Member of this House.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as those of us who have been here for some time are aware, the Standing Orders exist to cover the basic operations of the House. In addition to that, however, there are numerous practices which are unwritten but nevertheless essential to the proper operation of the House. One of those practices, which at least this Government applies as a matter of courtesy, is to give the Opposition advance warning of the Government's intentions. We do not have to do that according to the Standing Orders but we do it. In keeping with that tradition, and in trying to maintain decorum and order in the House, as well as a certain amount of respect for each other's opinions, I arranged for a representative of the NDP and representatives of the Liberal Party to be briefed on the Bill at ten o'clock this morning in advance of our introducing it. I thought it was a matter of courtesy so that they could respond to it. The net effect of that courtesy was that they were able to assemble various techniques to prevent us from introducing the Bill.

If it is the decision that we should not extend that courtesy to the Opposition any longer, that we should just sneak up on them so to speak, then so be it. However, the institution will lose. I question whether the House Leader of the NDP thinks it is right, after we extended the courtesy of briefing his official critic, to use that information to try to frustrate the Government in its attempt to expose this legislation to the public.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to the attention of the House that the

Point of Order—Mr. McKinnon

Government gave notice on the Order Paper, on November 4, that this Bill was forthcoming.

Mr. Andre: Any day.

Mr. Gauthier: If the Minister will listen, we had notice 48 hours ago. The second point is that until the House has pronounced itself on whether the Bill will be read the first time or not, I do not think the Minister has the right to prejudice that decision which we made today.

Mr. Andre: I just want to make it clear, lest there be some misinterpretation, that except for members of the Opposition who were briefed this morning, no one else has been given a copy of the Bill and there was no intention that anyone else would get a copy. The legislation we would like to introduce and expose to the public if we can is, as I have said in this House on many occasions, essentially the same as the draft Bill exposed to the public on June 27. The fine tuning we talked about is relatively modest. The Bill has not been shown to anyone else except to members of the Opposition as a matter of courtesy, which apparently they do not want.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has listened with interest to the exchange and I think it would be appropriate to consider the matter carefully and return to the Chamber with comments at an appropriate time. The Chair will be in touch with Hon. Members.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the usual business question. I wonder if the Government House Leader could inform the House what Bills he intends to call tomorrow. As well, given that the House is not sitting next week, can he give us the agenda for November 17?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to do that. Today we will continue with Bill C-17, the Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax, followed by Bill C-14, the Excise Tax Act, followed by Bill C-16, amendments to the House of Commons Act. If we conclude with those, we will move to the unemployment insurance Bill.

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POINTS OF ORDER

PETITIONS—ALLEGED MISREPRESENTATION BY MEMBERS

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have reason to believe that the actual wording of the petition tabled by the Hon. Member for Windsor—Walkerville (Mr.