

Petitions

Day. Will there be an opportunity to fulfil the requests of various government officials that we discuss this today?

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Hudon) contacted me prior to Question Period and advised me that papers would be produced pursuant to a motion that I have had on the Order Paper since the March 1. The Government seems to have its wires crossed.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, so that the record is clear on that point of order, we have tried for several weeks to find a Member present in the House or have somebody delegated so that we could indeed produce those papers.

An Hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Hawkes: I think the record will show that we have tried every Wednesday for several weeks in a row.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, we expected to get to the point where the Government indicates responses to Questions on the Order Paper. We were notified that the Government was going to provide a response to a Question on the Order Paper by the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett). The media has already presented me with that information.

In other words, one of the national newspapers of Canada received the information that the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam requested prior to it being tabled in the House of Commons. I was going to raise that when we got to it in the normal point in Routine Proceedings.

Since the Government decided not to have Routine Proceedings, I felt that this was the only time to raise this. It is a very serious breach of privilege in that the media apparently is being presented or given material—confidential material—prior to it being tabled in the House of Commons and prior to the Hon. Member requesting the information receiving said information. I wanted to raise that. It is a very serious point of order.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I was apprised earlier this day that this point of order might indeed be raised. I would point out that the Government has not yet responded to the question in the House and that when Members opposite see the Government's response to the question they may choose to raise a point of order at that point or they may choose not to. It is my understanding that perhaps the press does have access to the information, but I am not sure that they have access to the answer to the question which the Member opposite asked. The information available to me says there is some difference in what the press may have. It is a draft possible answer.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the Hon. Member for Skeena in a moment. I may not have completely understood the position of the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap. The Chair took it that what he is saying is that some information was given out which would have, in the normal course of proceedings, been

given here in the Chamber, but was given out by the Government to the media. Is that the accusation, if I can put it that way?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the situation. It is a very serious breach of traditions of the House when members of the media are receiving confidential information destined for a specific Member prior to it being tabled. This is the first opportunity I have had to raise this. It was in the hands of the media last night when it was supposed to be tabled in the House of Commons today.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify what the Parliamentary Secretary seemed to be alluding to. I have been here in the House every day this week. You could check *Hansard*. I was in the House every day last week except for Tuesday, when I was in Hull the whole of the day with the standing committee dealing with Bill C-31 in its final report.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, the House Leader of the New Democratic Party has raised the issue of the answer to a question. I would indicate that after we are on Orders of the Day, with the unanimous consent of the House, I would be very happy to table the answer to the Member's question. Then he would have a chance to look at that and see whether or not he wants to pursue a question at a later stage.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the Deputy House Leader for the Government wanted us to force a vote on this move, to go directly to Government Orders so that we could take up time this afternoon so that the Government would not have to listen to the debates by the various back-benchers against the language legislation. Since we have agreed to go directly to Orders of the Day, we are looking forward to hearing some of these Neanderthal points of view put forward by Members of the Conservative Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap and the Parliamentary Secretary could assist the Chair. I take it that there was a suggestion made by the Parliamentary Secretary that if there was consent, he would produce the particular matter which has been the subject of discussion. It would seem to the Chair that that might be helpful. If it was agreed, that could be done right now and then we would just carry on as we have been. As I indicated, that would take consent.

● (1520)

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to achieve is to get Orders of the Day called so that report stage of Bill C-72 is called and before the House. Once that takes place we can have unanimous consent if the House wishes. It is key to us that we get on to that debate.

Mr. Speaker: I think the Chair did call Orders of the Day. My position is that we have reached Orders of the Day.