

Standing Orders and Procedure

that as a specific point of order, upon which no doubt the Chair will want to hear him and perhaps others as well before coming to a decision.

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I have assumed that the latter point made by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) is a point of order which would arise in the event the Government called Bill C-133. I presume that you will not be ruling on that matter but will be prepared to hear arguments after that matter has been called, if indeed it is called.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker: In response to the point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), I must point out that if there are discrepancies between the English and French texts, I feel confident that agreement will be reached so that both texts are identical, but I have the impression that the Clerk did ask for clarification about the two versions because it is obvious that they are not the same. It is a matter of knowing which of the two is official and he is waiting for an answer about that. We will simply have to wait. Should a practical problem arise in the House in the meantime, the Chair will make a temporary ruling until a reply is received from the Committee. Both versions of the Standing Orders must, of course, be identical. The Hon. Member quite properly pointed out that it is sometimes necessary to read both versions to get a clear understanding of the meaning.

However, I think I can rule immediately on the regrouping of the amendments introduced by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier. Under the old Standing Orders, the amendments were regrouped because they could be debated at the same time, that is, the subject matter of the amendments was the same and the Chair would acknowledge that amendments related to the same subject matter ought to be regrouped and I believe that the time allocated for amendments was 20 minutes, not 20 minutes for each regrouped amendment, but 20 minutes for the two, three or four amendments or for the series of amendments. Therefore, nothing is changed. Henceforth, as we used to proceed in the past, the allocated time will be ten instead of twenty minutes when the Chair regroups amendments, not ten minutes for each amendment so regrouped as the Hon. Member was perhaps trying to suggest.

As for the bill which may be called this afternoon, I personally believe that I would be well advised to wait until it is before the House, and if it should be necessary to raise points of order, Hon. Members will seek the floor and I will rule at that time. In my opinion, it is too early to debate that question.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge-Foothills): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to bring to your attention and flag your comments with respect to Standing Order 21 which refers to statements by Members. I believe you stated that you would distribute time for those statements

based on the percentage of Members in the House. While that might work out to be fair and equal as between the Government and the Opposition now under Standing Order 18(3), I wonder if you should perhaps reserve your ruling since a circumstance may arise in the future where a Government would have many more Members and the period for statements would then turn out to be a great advantage to the Government in power. I would think, rather, that the opportunity should be almost equal as between the Government and the Official Opposition, with any third parties or independent Members having a percentage share.

I would simply like you not to make a ruling on that at this time, or alternatively, if you are to make a ruling, for us to have some debate on that point.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, the point that I wish to make is that if the decision is to be made that the distribution of time is to be made equally across the floor of the House, those Members which form the Cabinet should be deducted from the total number of Members.

Miss MacDonald: And Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. Deans: My hon. friend says Parliamentary Secretaries as well. I make the point that Cabinet Members do, in fact, have a time in the proceedings when they are able to make statements under "Statements by Ministers". In making the calculation I would urge you to consider that there already is a provision for Cabinet Ministers to make statements in the House, and therefore the total number of Cabinet Ministers should be deducted from the total number of Government Members.

Mr. Nielsen: And Parliamentary Secretaries.

Mr. Deans: My colleague from Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) says Parliamentary Secretaries too. I suggest you should consider that in addition to the point I am making in order to set out clearly a degree of fairness for Members who are deemed to be other than Members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, I wish to join with my colleague from the NDP in making a point of order with specific reference to the numbers. The rules provide that Cabinet Ministers shall not be included in the Members making statements for the very reason he has stated, that they have their opportunity. It is an opportunity that is not used, much to the dismay of our side. Cabinet Ministers do not take that opportunity to make statements.

In view of the ample opportunity for Parliamentary Secretaries to make statements in support of Bills during the adjournment debate and in speaking engagements, I would ask you also to consider whether they should be subtracted from the number of Government Members when you are making your calculation as to what is fair for the ordinary Members who want to bring a statement to the House that they feel important and should be made.