

Privilege

There are 38 or 39 cabinet ministers who sit in this House of Commons. I have raised at least 15 times the number of times that members of the government have failed to attend to their business in this House during a discussion of government business. I did not want to go back through the *Hansards* and root out all the dates and pages, but I could if Your Honour would like to have that list.

I know that the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole is appalled. Quite often when I raise this, he says that it is not fair to comment on the presence or absence of members from this House. Well, on Friday, we have a record of who was here.

Mr. Andre: After the normal hour of adjournment.

Mr. Milliken: While the House was still sitting, discussing government business, the following members whose names were taken down as being present, were said to be present. I read from the *Votes and Proceedings* for Friday: Mr. Paproski, Messrs. Anawak, Assad, Barrett, Benjamin and Boudria; Ms. Clancy, Messrs. Edmonston, Gauthier, LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso), MacWilliam, McCurdy, Murphy and Riis.

Mr. Gauthier: Not one single minister.

Mr. Andre: How about Milliken?

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Milliken was not here at that time.

Mr. Gauthier: I sent him home, because he had to go to Kingston. He had to drive in a storm.

Mr. Andre: Everybody else has to stay here.

An Hon. Member: That is right, he sat at home—

Mr. Speaker: It has been very well explained to the Chair what happened. I do not know that there is anything more to be gained, in terms of argument, going over the members who were or were not here at the time.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to point out is that the points of order I have been raising on these occasions in fact have additional validity because on Friday we have a record of the fact that not a single minister of the Crown was present during a discussion of government business. I am told it is out of order to raise that point in the course of debate and yet here we have a recorded note in the *Votes and Proceedings* of this House, it will go in the *Journals*, that there was not a single minister of the Crown present during the discussion of

government business. I say to Your Honour that that in itself constitutes a contempt of the House and it is a continuing contempt unlike the one that was used as a gimmick by the chief Government Whip.

What is the Whip's function? It is to ensure that members attend the House. That is the Whip's principal function and on Friday afternoon we had the spectacle of the government Whip rising in this House and saying that he did not see a quorum. Was he here for the quorum count? Where did he go? Did he go out in the snowstorm and get lost? He disappeared in the 15 minutes the bells rang. He disappeared. I suggest, Your Honour, that he had a duty to be here and to be counted as part of that quorum.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the government has used this quorum rule in the course of its own business, in its discussion of the most important single item of business it has to deal with in this House, the business of supply, which it treats with such contempt I may say, to then use those rules to advantage to try to cut off opposition debate. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it is an unfair form of closure. It is a misuse and misapplication of those rules.

I want to turn, Sir, to the question of reinstatement because as my friend from Ottawa—Vanier has argued, the government now must move to reinstate this, failing which I suggest the proper course is for the government to prorogue this session and start off with a new Speech from the Throne. I could give the government House leader a bit of friendly advice, and that is that he include in this Speech from the Throne a request for supply since there was not one in the last Speech from the Throne. He may have heard me argue that last April.

While Your Honour held that it was not a requirement in that speech, I suggest Your Honour may have considered the fact that this House had already adopted a motion at that time for the consideration of the business of supply because that motion, as my friend from Ottawa—Vanier has pointed out, was carried on April 3, 1989.

That motion has been lost. I suggest that perhaps Your Honour would want to look at the possibility of reviving the business of supply in this House in light of the fact that there was no request for supply in the Speech from the Throne at the beginning of the session. I invite Your Honour to take another look at that particular item in light of the fact that this business of supply has now been lost and there is not a continuing item or order of the day