

As I suggested, Mr. Speaker, the document is going to be tabled. We suggest that it will be in order during the discussion at the committee stage to put forward an amendment which will correct the date of tabling of this Memorandum of Understanding, which is really what we are talking about. Since we share a previous occupation, I suggest, Sir, that this procedure may be viewed in terms of perfecting the record, in that it is not essential to the debate that this actually had been tabled. It is essential that it be in existence and it was in existence. I will get to that, if I may, in a minute.

At committee stage, we would suggest that an amendment be moved to correct the date. We suggest that it would have no impact on the essence of the Bill or on the essence of the debate that has taken place. We all have to ask ourselves if Canadians wish us to get on with the job at hand, which is to perfect the record and get the Bill into committee, or whether Canadians would wish us in the taxpayers interest simply to scrap this week of debate and start again. I think you would find that Canadians would come down on the side of taking the debate as read and going from there.

● (1220)

I would also like to refer to the specific wording in the Bill if I may. You may not have this before you, Mr. Speaker, but I am sure you will have an opportunity to consider it. Clause 2(3) of the Bill includes the words "recourse may be had". I think the operative word there is "may". This means that the Memorandum of Understanding and the interpretation of the Schedule can be dealt with by using other methods. The clause is permissive. It is neither direct nor specific but indicates only that recourse may be had. The Schedule is appended to the Bill and explains in detail the elements of the Memorandum of Understanding. As I have said before, it does not go to the essence of the Ways and Means motion and the Bill. The clause is merely permissive.

If you do some research, Mr. Speaker, and I must admit that I was busy doing that myself last evening, you will find that there is a suggestion in Erskine May that alterations rather than amendments can be made to a Bill. Page 526 of the most recent edition of Erskine May indicates that alterations can be made to correct clerical errors. I submit that this is a clerical error which will be corrected when the Minister tables the document.

I would also submit that the clause in the Bill refers specifically to this Memorandum of Understanding and uses the words: "and tabled". The document is in existence and if the clause used only the word "tabled", I think we would be in trouble. However, it uses the words "and tabled". The document which is in existence is an agreement between two powers, the United States of America and Canada.

I would draw my remarks to a close by saying that no one in this place is suggesting that Standing Order 108 does not exist. I admit that it exists. However, I think it is fair to suggest that the people of Canada would like to see us deal with those Standing Orders in a way that serves democracy and assures

that debate takes place. I suggest that we are all in this together, whether it is the Opposition—

**Mr. Gauthier:** Keep your own troubles. Come on now, wiggle out of that one.

**Mr. Lewis:** We are dealing with them. We have all debated this matter for a week. There is a clerical error which can be corrected by the Minister tabling the Memorandum of Understanding and that will take place in a minute.

I suggest that the Bill stands on its own. The tabling of this document and the perfecting of it by giving it a number is not something that goes to the essence of the Bill or the principle of the debate at second reading but is something which naturally will be corrected at committee stage.

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Humbolt—Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I note that the traditions and practices of this House have been to follow the rules quite strictly and that we vary from those rules only with the agreement of all Parties in the House, and we do that quite regularly. There was no such call by the Government for that sort of agreement from the various Parties in the House when the Government did not table the agreement as the Bill indicated it should have done.

The second point I wish to make is that this agreement that has not yet been tabled has not yet been translated into French. Because it is such an integral part of this particular piece of legislation, I think Francophone Members of the House have every right to expect it to be translated accurately into French before they decide whether to support or not to support this Bill in principle at second reading stage. How can Francophone Members decide on the principle of the Bill and the position they wish to take on it if such documentation is not available to them?

On those two counts, I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to rule in favour of the point of order put forward by the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray). As well, I would urge you to recall that previous legislation had been delayed in the House simply because certain paperwork had not been done properly. The most recent such Bill I can recall is Bill C-22. Last June, the Government did not get the Bill put through simply because it had not completed the paperwork. I think this case is similar in some ways to that one. I would urge you to pay some attention to the very good arguments made by the Hon. Member for Windsor West and to pay some fair amount of attention to the fact that all of the extremely pertinent documentation on a very important international agreement was not available to Francophone Members of the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment briefly on whether Bill C-37 may be debated in the House at this time. Standing Order 108 says clearly that:

No bill may be introduced either in blank or in an imperfect shape.