

important topic which my colleague has brought to the attention of the House.

Very clearly Standing Order 99(2) reads as follows:

Within 150 days of the presentation of a report from a standing or special committee, the government shall, upon the request of the committee, table a comprehensive response thereto.

I repeat: "table a comprehensive response thereto". Clearly there was such a request filed by the committee with the Government through this House upon the tabling of that report in the House. Therefore, it is the duty of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) to report in this House in a comprehensive manner.

● (1520)

I draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the letter the Minister sent to the Chairperson of the committee on July 28. The Minister said in part, and I quote:

—I am pleased to present an interim response,—

Very clearly if this is an interim response one can assume it is not comprehensive, otherwise it would not be called "interim". The Minister closed his letter by stating in part:

—and to establishing a comprehensive, quality child-care program for our children.

In other words, the Minister plans to take that initiative at some point in the future, which again I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, appears to be in conflict or in breach of Standing Order 99(2) of the House of Commons.

Citation 8 in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition states:

A standing order has a continuing effect until changed or repealed.

In view of the fact that the rule we now have before us is applicable, has not been changed or been repealed, that rule is in order and should be followed by the Minister and any other Hon. Member of this House.

Citation 9 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition states:

By custom, changes in the Standing Orders are generally made after study and a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

Very clearly the committee has not formulated a wish to change that rule of the House. This further adds to what I said previously, that the rule is still in effect and must be followed by the Minister and, for that matter, by any other Hon. Member.

Finally, Citation 384 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition, states:

Papers which must be laid before the House in pursuance of any Standing Order of the House are usually brought down without any formality by being deposited with the Clerk of the House as if they had been laid on the Table.

This rule very clearly states that the usual procedure is for the Minister to table whatever response he has to give pursuant to our Standing Orders without any formality and to do so according to the rule. There is no exception indicated in Citation 384. One has to further assume it was the duty of the

Point of Order—Ms. Copps

Minister to comply with the rules which were in effect at that particular time.

For these reasons, I would ask that the Chair verify the excellent point brought to the attention of the House by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) and give a response to the House that the Minister must comply, pursuant to our Standing Orders, with a request which was made by a parliamentary committee.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the point that is being made by my colleague, it seems to me we are here debating the word "comprehensive". It also seems to me that we should be moving on with the business of the House. I submit that this entire exercise is to allow the immigration critic of the Liberal Party to be outside doing scrums and I think that is an abuse of this House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can assist Hon. Members.

[*Translation*]

The question is an important one. It arises from the interpretation of a certain term in our Standing Orders.

[*English*]

Naturally, that is a matter which the Speaker takes seriously. I know there are some other interventions to be made, but I think all Hon. Members could assist the Speaker in keeping their remarks exactly on the point I have to decide. Hon. Members will know that I have already had to comment on a similar situation, although I am not prepared to say until I have heard all the interventions that it is exactly the same. However, I am aware of the importance of the issue being raised.

I am also aware, and I might indicate this to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) who has indicated his intention to speak on this matter, that the Minister has given at least some explanation, as I read the letter. The Minister wants to come back later with "a comprehensive report". Those reasons may be very valid, although they may not completely answer the procedural difficulty which has been brought to the attention of the Chair.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I hope I can make a comment on this parliamentary reform without being accused by the Deputy House Leader of being a party to some strategy which has nothing to do with the matter.

I only want to say that what we are debating here, if we are debating anything, is whether or not this particular reform, which was instituted as a result of recommendations of the committee on which I sat—for example, the idea that the Government would somehow be accountable to committees and would have to respond to recommendations of committees