

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

members. Soon they will be classed as a party in this House, particularly if it continues to grow.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I wonder who the leader will be.

Mr. Peters: They can fight about that themselves. Perhaps they will take turns. It would be very democratic; there would be a new leader every day.

An opportunity for debate has been developed. The government House leader would be very unwise to persuade the House, under the circumstances, to give him or any other member an opportunity to rise and object, on the basis of privilege, to a motion under Standing Order 43. Mr. Speaker would be required to take tranquillizers every day, if that were introduced in addition to his other responsibilities.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) indicated that at sometime in the future, we may reach a point where we accept such motions. If the hon. member for Ottawa West is correct, we will accept them with regularity so that they can be debated. If Your Honour finds that motions are of urgent and pressing necessity, and the House gives unanimous consent, what will happen to government orders? One must remember what occurred the other day. The matter was placed on the order paper as government order No. 1. The government or cabinet did not initiate that order; the House unanimously decided upon it. We are obligated to debate and formally conclude this matter. Under normal circumstances it would be called on either the second or third day, and it would be a priority until disposed of by the House. That has not been decided in this particular instance. Perhaps that is the best way to leave this matter.

One must consider that at some point in the future, the House will be faced with a matter which requires immediate debate until conclusion. The subject matter of the last motion in question was important enough to have the support of members of all parties, and it should not have been delegated to a position, where it perhaps will die on the order paper at the end of this session.

Surprisingly motions under Standing Order 43, and oral questions, are now regarded as a best seller on the television screens in Ottawa and other areas. I have had occasion to meet many people in stores who said, "You are Mr. So and So. I have seen you on television." I had never met these people before.

A great deal of enthusiasm is developing for the televising of the proceedings of the House. It is better than "The Edge of Night." It supersedes many other soap operas. It is cheap. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation can afford to run it. It is all Canadian talent. Certainly it has some comic relief for viewers. It has some good debates. Many people are becoming interested in the actual manner in which government is run.

Not only do people watch the question period, but they are tuning in to the debates which follow. In fact many people hurry home and turn on their television sets to follow a

[Mr. Peters.]

particular debate, in which they have become interested, almost by accident.

An hon. Member: No commercials.

Mr. Peters: That is correct; there are no commercials. I should also like to point out that at least a dozen members of the press gallery are now watching the proceedings of the House on cable television. The political party leaders are sitting in their offices watching the proceedings as well. Of course, this is quite different from the situation when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was prime minister and, seriously criticized for snooping on parliament without coming to the chamber.

Your Honour has been given a great responsibility. I am pleased, surprised, and very gratified by the manner in which Your Honour has handled motions under Standing Order 43. Perhaps I do not present such motions often, but I watch them with interest. Your Honour has arrived at some very good snap decisions, and has been taxed by the ingenuity of members who are out to put something over someone. Regardless of the party, the Chair is faced with that problem.

● (1652)

The House leader for the opposition indicated he wanted you, Mr. Speaker, to fulfil an additional role. He wanted you to decide in respect of the urgency and pressing necessity of matters in motions under Standing Order 43. I do not think you should be faced with that task. I am quite satisfied that on occasion you stand and say nothing, without putting the motion because it is apparently frivolous. I think there is a role to be played by hon. members, including the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) on occasion, in moving motions that are frivolous. Hon. members do so on occasion to make a point, and that is the end of it, and no one expects the motion to go further.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I do not think you should be asked to assume the responsibility of deciding on the spur of the moment whether there is a matter of urgent and pressing necessity in a motion under Standing Order 43. This is something you are being asked to do all the time, and that is why I referred to television coverage of this chamber. I do not think you should have to make that decision as to whether someone has withheld unanimous consent.

It is very cowardly on the part of a member who objects to a motion to shout no from his seat, when you ask if there is unanimous consent. That hon. member does not have the guts to get up on his feet and say no. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. MacFarlane) could stand in his place, and he will be seen when he says no. I think you, Mr. Speaker, should be able to point to an hon. member, and say that the hon. member for such and such a constituency says no. You should be in a position to state that someone has withheld consent. People who do not understand exactly what is involved in asking for unanimous consent, perhaps watching the television, often feel that you have made the decision that the motion is unacceptable.