

In every instance that I can recall going back 17 or 18 years, I say with some modesty that Government always extended Opposition Members the courtesy of informing them of the content. There has never been any aberration from the application of that principle. We have debated the subject matter from time to time, but what the Government is attempting to do here is simply to make available to select Hon. Members of this chamber the content of the Bill. There is no objection to dealing with the Bill but, rather, there is an objection to the process.

This practice has always been carried out in the past by Ministers of Transport, Ministers of Justice, Ministers of External Affairs, Ministers of National Defence, Ministers of Energy, Mines and Resources and Ministers of Fisheries and Oceans. I am not exaggerating. The staff of the Parliamentary Secretary can verify the fact that over the last 25 years there has not been an aberration. It is not a common practice but the practice has been there, and perhaps we should pay a little bit more attention to it.

Let there be no misunderstanding about the fact that the subject matter, the content, was wide open and public. There was no attempt to hide it or impose intervention by way of exception in any way. It was always wide open. It was a recognition on the part of Government that it was not infallible and that, in fact, good concepts could be bettered if they were widely broadcast to a legitimately interested community. In the discussion which would take place in detail on the subject matter, amendments which could be construed as substantive could be proposed, and then the matter would go before the House for second reading debate. However, it should not be narrowly restricted to one or two Members, or even to 102. There are other Members of this Chamber whom I am sure have not seen this matter, and if they had the benefit of the half or three-quarter of an hour before the House adjourns for the day, I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary could in fact achieve what it is that he seems to want to achieve. But do not make the mistake that this Chamber will now accept, or ever has in the past accepted blindly such a proposition. It is the principle that we are talking about, not the end. The implication left by that holier-than-thou friend of mine from that little mountain—Hamilton, or wherever it is—that the only people in this country concerned about the subject matter or content of the Bill under question are those to my left is a crock of nonsense.

● (1430)

If the Parliamentary Secretary can in fact get himself geared up to go outside, I think he will find that there are about 4,000 to about 6,000 copies of the Bill printed and awaiting distribution. It awaits some significant action on his part. I trust he is enjoying signing his letters, because I am making two very serious points.

This is a common practice. Do not try to obfuscate it by the fog that you are trying to put over the top of it. We have always been open about these matters. Why not proceed in that manner today? There is nothing wrong with first reading

and reference of the subject matter to committee before second reading and acceptance in principle. Just simply let us take a look at it. It is the easiest thing in the world to do. That is the process, in any event.

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, one point that has not been raised today, and the Deputy Government House Leader has ignored it, is whether you do not feel as Speaker of this House that you have an obligation to see that all Members of the House are treated equally.

I would submit, sir, to you, and through you to the Deputy Government House Leader, that we have been asked to have this draft bill reproduced in the office of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), on his machine; but that does not take care of every Member of this House. More particularly, it does not take care of an individual Member, a Private Member, not belonging to a party. He has as much right in this House to be informed on this Bill as the rest of us have. I think we should expect that when the Deputy Government House Leader comes up with some solution it should take into account every Member of the House and not just those who happen to belong to a Party.

Mrs. Appoloni: Mr. Speaker, it could be that when you have heard my presentation you may rule it a matter of privilege rather than a point of order.

I have been listening very carefully both in Question Period today and to the subsequent debate this afternoon. I believe you could very well find that someone's privileges are being trampled upon in this whole affair. I am speaking on behalf of the handicapped and women. I happen to be a member of both those groups, I personally, and as a handicapped person and as a woman, I am outraged that both groups should be used as the tool of a cheap political ploy.

The handicapped and the women of Canada have waited for many, many years to have their rights readjusted. I think we can wait another couple of days, particularly if our dignity is going to be absolutely destroyed and torn to shreds by what is happening today in this House.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, just one small contribution. I would like to remind the Parliamentary Secretary to the House Leader that if they were to go through the normal distribution process and use the normal printing press, the cost to distribute the Bill would be considerably less than the cost will be if we are forced to use xerox machines. That money could be used to provide services to the handicapped. Those on this side of the House would rather see the money saved by using the normal process put to that use.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Chair does not have a motion in front of it. Some Hon. Member may choose to rise and put a motion, in which case the House will deal with it as it sees fit.

We do have a point of order explored at some length by Hon. Members. I do not think it should be the responsibility of