

Mr. Crosbie: He is a jerk.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: The Speaker did not hear that.

● (1520)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 106(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Government's response to petitions, Nos. 332-745, 332-746, 332-869, 332-870, 332-871, 332-1225, 332-1226, 332-1268 and 332-1269.

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POINT OF ORDER

ADVANCE NOTICE OF MINISTERS' STATEMENTS

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a brief point of order. It is this. At 2.25 p.m. during the Question Period I had handed to me an envelope. In that envelope I found a copy of the statement to be given by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard). At the same time an envelope with the same statement was delivered to the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand), our Official Opposition critic for employment.

It has been the long standing custom and tradition, in fact an informal understanding, between the Government and Opposition Parties, which applied before the election, that opposition spokesmen would get at least two hours' notice of statements to be presented on behalf of the Government. In spite of this tradition, in spite of this understanding which dated back before the election, the statement was not presented in advance to myself or to the New Democratic Party House Leader and the critics for the Official Opposition and the NDP pursuant to that understanding. This is a gross discourtesy, Mr. Speaker. It is a breach of that understanding of which I spoke.

I want to say after learning of this, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader came to me behind the curtains, recognized the breach of the understanding and suggested that we interrupt our Liberal Opposition the day after the first three speakers so that the statement could be given and responses pursuant to the rules could be made by the Opposition spokesmen. His intentions were positive. He

Point of Order—Mr. Gray (Windsor West)

wanted to give the critics more time to prepare their responses. I said then and I say now that this is unacceptable. We should not have to interrupt our Opposition day for that purpose. In fact, there is another discourtesy involved here with the Minister of Employment and Immigration desiring to make a statement on motions prior to an Opposition day. This is not generally done.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this occurrence is a serious breach of courtesy and of the informal understanding that exists between the Parties in this House, and I therefore raise a point of order. I must point out, not only to you, Mr. Speaker, who are very much aware of the courtesy that must prevail in dealings between parties, but especially to the Government that if it wants co-operation between the Parties in this House, it must stop this habit of not giving the Official Opposition or the third party in the House sufficient notice of a statement so that we can prepare an appropriate reply.

[English]

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is unacceptable conduct on the part of the Minister, and if this Government, which already has so many things to answer for, wants to have any kind of co-operation in future in this House, it must cease this unacceptable conduct.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I want to add to the comments made by my hon. colleague, the House Leader for the Official Opposition (Mr. Gray), and say that this goes beyond the simple courtesy that the House has been used to now for many, many months whereby Ministers before they give statements simply carry out the appropriate courtesy and inform the critics well in advance enabling the critics to respond in an appropriate and thorough fashion.

As the House Leader for the Official Opposition has indicated, for the House to work effectively it requires co-operation on both sides of the House. It requires members to be thoughtful, courteous and to take the extra steps to facilitate a very sophisticated debate in the House of Commons. To do that, it is important that Members of Parliament be given as much advance notice as possible about the business of the House.

I am pleased to say that the House Leader for the Government has given us, a number of days in advance, an indication of the business of the House. But, Mr. Speaker, halfway through Question Period we were all surprised to learn that an Opposition day was to have a portion of it taken up by the Minister making a statement—

Mr. Mazankowski: No.

Mr. Riis: Disrupted by the Minister making a statement. We are not asking so much for the courtesy—I think that goes without saying—but to facilitate and elevate debate, it is important that Members such as the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), who was unaware that this statement