

Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen

are set out on page 3 of Beauchesne's fifth edition in part as follows:

To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every Member to express his opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum—

That sets out the guidelines, certain rules and regulations that are designed to allow Parliament and Members of Parliament to function in a real and positive way.

When we have such things as allotted days set out on the Order Paper, it is for a certain purpose, that purpose being that the opposition can organize its debate, its methods, and its approach to various levels of government business. It is a very serious and important opportunity for the opposition to criticize the government.

In regard to this point of order I think it is essential that we look at how important these provisions are and how necessary they are to the opposition and, in fact, to all members of the House of Commons in order that they may perform their duties and make certain that the laws and legislation passed by the House are passed in accordance with certain procedures and forms.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, I should like to add a word or two in response to the remarks of the acting House leader for the New Democratic Party and my colleague the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper). It has been the practice in this House for the government House leader to announce the business of the House for some period of time and for that to be recorded in the orders of the day. Yesterday we came to something which was unprecedented, a change made in the orders of the day by the government House leader.

I would ask you to address yourself, Madam Speaker, to the way in which the orders of the day were changed—not that they were changed but the way in which they were changed. I would like to refer you to page 89 of Beauchesne's fifth edition, Citation 276 which reads as follows:

A motion to proceed to another government order may be moved only by the government House leader (or a member acting on his behalf).

Yesterday an unprecedented change in government business was made by the government because of a certain fear of a vote. That change was not made by any motion offered by the government House leader or anyone acting on his behalf, but simply by the government House leader making the comment that he was changing it.

I think what we on this side are after is some finality. People ask us how we conduct the business of government, what we do day in, day out, how we organize our weeks and our months. We have to be able to tell the people who send us here that there is some certainty in this House. The certainty that we on this side are looking for is the certainty of government orders.

When government orders which have already been set into the orders of the day by the government House leader, by his statement—and until now we have taken his word for it—those words are set in stone, set in the *Journals* or set in *Hansard*, and surely we are owed the courtesy of a motion

which is part of the business of the House, rather than an offhand comment such as we got yesterday from the government House leader, if there is to be a change.

Citation 276 of Beauchesne's says "A motion to proceed to another government order may be moved—," and it seems to me that infers that there will be a motion to change the business of the day; something which can be considered, which is in writing, which has formality to it and would be voted upon. Perhaps we would not have won the vote on the motion, but at least it should have been moved by the government House leader or by the deputy government House leader. Neither of those events occurred, Madam Speaker.

In your ruling, Madam Speaker, I would ask you to address the question of whether it was done properly by just announcing it in an offhand manner and whether, when we reach government orders today or any other day, we are to be subjected to such a comment in the middle of the business of the day. When the government House leader has set the business for the day, is he going to be forced—and I say, forced—by the rules which govern this House, forced by tradition, by Beauchesne, by the Standing Orders and orders of the day, to bring in a motion. It is like any motion and the mover and seconder lose control over it once it is within the purview of the House. I suggest that when the orders of the day come within the purview of the House, then a motion must be introduced, seconded and debated.

Madam Speaker: Just before I tell the House that I will reserve on this point of order and examine all the presentations that have been made, for which I thank hon. members, and that I will rule on it later, I want to reply to the hon. member for Yukon concerning a meeting which was requested between the House leaders and myself. All of my agenda was open to the House leaders and the reason the meeting has not taken place until now is that I could not get the three House leaders to agree on the same day. My agenda is still open and anytime they can agree on the same day I will slash out anything on my agenda in order to accommodate them.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, your situation and mine are exactly the same. I will make time, at any time to hold this meeting because of the seriousness of the situation.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. DEANS—DELAY IN DISTRIBUTION OF BILL C-78

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, this is a different point of order not related in any way to the point we have been discussing for some time.

It is my understanding that when we get to the orders of the day it is the intention of the government House leader or the person acting on his behalf, to call Bill C-78. You are probably not aware that the bill was not available to anyone prior to five o'clock last evening; in fact, we had to go and get a copy that had not yet been filed for distribution purposes, in order to see