

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have one brief point to make in addition to the points that have been well made by Members on all sides of the House. The time of Question Period is valuable. Members from all sides of the House who wish to ask a question and hold the Government accountable may do so during that 45-minute period. If there are things such as the appointments review, which all Members of the House have agreed would be more properly dealt with in committee, it seems to me we would be better advised to use the time of the committee rather than the time of Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members have contributed to the debate on this point of order, and I take with very good grace the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski). The Chair might comment on the definition of a precedent. A precedent is something that happened once upon a time and that everyone decided to follow. Looking at a precedent in legal terms, it is usually the consequence of a decision made after argument has been proffered to the Chair or a judge on a certain point.

I would point out to Hon. Members that just because something may turn up in the record of this Chamber which seems to abridge the rules does not of course mean that it creates a precedent. It may be something that slips by because the Speaker did not notice it or the Speaker might very deliberately let something slip by, given what was going on at that moment. Sometimes, as Hon. Members know, it is advisable for the Speaker to not hear something or to let something go.

I do not want Hon. Members to think that if something has happened and is recorded in the minutes of this Chamber, it necessarily creates a precedent. The Chair is sometimes in difficulty but sometimes guided on occasions when there has been a ruling made by a Speaker on a point that has been argued and which is apposite to the point that is causing the concern for Hon. Members.

The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister will know that I have not at this point been able to look at the references which have been put before me, but I will look at them. I am aware of some of them in any event because there were some questions which gave the Chair some momentary difficulty.

I might just make the following observation out of caution and out of concern for good manners and as much fairness as we can bring to bear in our deliberations, without impinging on the duty all Members have to speak fearlessly on matters of public interest. There is concern on the part of some Hon. Members in the Chamber about the fact that certain people, who may or may not be about to be appointed but who will go through the new reform process whereby their qualifications will be examined by all Hon. Members, are mentioned in

Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act

Question Period, sometimes not in a complimentary way. Perhaps that is something Members will want to consider. In any event, I appreciate the comments. I repeat that Members should not think that because the Chair may choose to let something go under certain circumstances in the interests of good order, common sense, and a happy relationship here, that necessarily creates a precedent. The Chair does not consider that it does.

● (1550)

Mr. Murphy: I rise on a point of order and one that you have referred to when speaking in regard to the intervention of the Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). It was mentioned by the Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme) that it was apparent that the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) was indeed using the "blues" of this House. It was my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that you did not say you would look at that matter, but that it was a matter that Members should look at. I would suggest that it is matter that you should look at.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can allay any fears. The Chair will look at that matter. The resolution of it may well involve a discussion with the Members. I take seriously the point that was raised a few minutes ago.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Bills for the purpose of introducing, under the name of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre), an Act to amend the Patent Act.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister has asked for unanimous consent to revert to an earlier proceeding. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PETROLEUM AND GAS REVENUE TAX ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Wednesday, November 5, consideration of the motion of Mr. Hockin that Bill C-17, an Act to amend the Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act and the Income Tax Act and to repeal the Petroleum and Gas Revenue Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a Legislative Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Resuming debate.