

Business of the House

that we should conduct negotiations on the floor of the House. I agree with that, and I think it is unfortunate that we are conducting negotiations on the floor of the House today. However, the ruling that you made with regard to the appropriateness of the government House leader calling the business of the House in whatever order he sees fit is quite clearly set out in the rules. Much though I would like to argue that, I cannot find an argument that would be sustainable.

● (1550)

The other side of the question is that in a dispute such as this it is always very difficult to determine just how much of what one hears is absolutely correct in the minds of all the parties taking part in the discussion. I would concede to the House leader of the official opposition that he did indeed indicate to me that the Friday next—that being tomorrow—would be an opposition day for the NDP, subject to caucus approval. That has always been the case. In fact, any time I have had dealings with either of the House leaders there has been, from time to time, the necessity to make an agreement, subject to it being checked out with either the leader of a party or with the caucus of the member that is represented. That is not out of the ordinary.

The reason we came to the conclusion, however, that tomorrow was to be our opposition day was a conversation between my leader and the Leader of the Official Opposition yesterday afternoon after the Conservative caucus had met. At that point, if I understand the gist of the conversation correctly, what was said was that we had examined the possibility of a particular motion and had decided we were not disposed to commit ourselves to dealing with it. We had looked at another motion and suggested that we felt better about that one, given that we felt on balance that it was more substantive. We were therefore prepared to go ahead with the opposition day on one of the two motions.

My understanding of the conversation as it was related to me was that no objection was made at that time, so we assumed and I think correctly, that we were going to proceed. I am sure the dispute is one that we will resolve at House leaders' meetings; it is not a dispute that I think can be resolved by the Chair. I think it is unfortunate, but probably necessary, that we have further meetings, and I hope we will be able to deal with our motion when this particular matter is called again next week.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, are we still on House business?

Madam Speaker: Yes, we are.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I have a question for the government House leader. On December 8, 1981 I put a question to the President of the Treasury Board which dealt with House business. I asked whether it was his intention to introduce for consideration of the House a bill that has the unanimous approval of members of the public accounts committee. It is a bill permitting the Auditor General to present his reports more frequently and on other than an emergency

basis. His colleague indicated at that time that the government would be consulting, I presume with the government House leader, who would then advise the House. Has that consultation taken place, and does the government intend to introduce that bill?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, we are not in a position to introduce this bill now. I suggest that my hon. colleague put his question to the President of the Treasury Board who is in a better position than I to give more detail on this.

Mr. Taylor: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the President of the Privy Council, in view of what has happened today, if we can ever believe a word he says from now on?

Mr. Clark: I guess the answer is no.

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PETITION

MR. WISE—CHANGES IN TAXATION OF LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES

Hon. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, I have the duty and the responsibility to table today for the second time in this session, a petition signed by many citizens of the city of St. Thomas in the county of Elgin.

This petition reflects the strong protest of Elgin constituents regarding the changes in the taxation of life insurance policies as stated by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) in the November 12 budget. This petition reflects the disappointment and the hostility of life insurance companies, sales representatives and thousands of policyholders across Canada.

I sincerely hope that the Minister of Finance will recognize this blunder and have the courage to withdraw these provisions immediately.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2,682, 3,248, 3,249, 3,311 and 3,521.

[Text]

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO PRIVACY

Question No. 2,682—**Mr. Beatty:**

1. What individual or which bodies within the government currently have responsibility for making recommendations to the government relating to privacy and, in each case (a) who is the individual or member of the body involved and for which department or agency does he/she work (b) to whom are reports made (c) on what date was the responsibility for privacy first given to that individual or body and on what date does his/her mandate expire (d) what reports or recommendations have been made to date and on what date were they made?