

Standing Order 26 which calls for notice; there are supply days and allotted days.

All I can say is that in the time that I have been in this place—I was first elected in 1963—in my opinion there has been a substantial expansion of the opportunities for private members of the House, not diminution. Our practices have changed in some ways, but under Standing Order 43 we have today a very good, frequent and, I submit, for the purposes of the members concerned, effective use of Standing Order 43. However, there is an abuse of the Standing Order which has crept in whereby false allegations are being put on the record, with no opportunity for refuting them. That is a matter which gives the government House leader (Mr. MacEachen) concern and which, I submit, gives all of us concern.

The suggestion that this matter should be decided by yourself, sir, that we must develop some mechanism by which we could assist you in the proper interpretation of the rules and procedures of this place, is not really one which adds a great deal at this time. We have to recognize what is taking place. I for one have no objection whatsoever to a referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization where we can thrash out the question of the application of Standing Order 45(2), which seems to me to be so clear that there can be no dispute about it, but since some hon. members have raised the question, so the order could be reinforced. I believe your observations, Mr. Speaker, are very appropriate with regard to this.

When we come to the question of the development of unsubstantiated allegations and debating points in prime television time, made for the purpose of scoring in a situation in which there can be no reply, I submit there has to be a mechanism by which an effective reply to a totally false accusation can be brought forward quickly and appropriately. It is not the same thing to throw it on the late show and have a reply at 10.30 in the evening. I submit we must recognize that where there is this kind of false allegation, someone on the government side must have the right to answer it then and there. That means that a point of order, or something like it, would have to be recognized during the period of motions under Standing Order 43. Hon. members on the other side would not like that.

Mr. Peters: Sure we would. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Mr. Francis: The fact remains that false allegations are put on the record in a way in which they cannot be answered. The fact remains that parliament, in consenting to, shall we say, glorifying it as a kind of abuse, is reflecting on itself.

I believe that the rules of the House in respect of Standing Order 45(2) are clear. I believe that the opportunities for private members to participate and make their points have been developed in many areas which are being increasingly recognized. I submit, sir, that there is an abuse under Standing Order 43 with regard to unsubstantiated allegations which, in my opinion, should be examined by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear the remarks of the last speaker and his argument, along the lines mentioned by the government House leader (Mr. MacEachen) that some of the points which are being raised in motions under Standing Order 43 demand a reply. He suggested that we should agree to the proposal of the House leader that he should be able to rise on a point of order, but that this would make opposition members angry. I am sure we would then return to a situation, which lasted for years where a member was able to rise as soon as a point which he had in question was raised. He could rise on a point of privilege, and away it went at any time, at every time, and sometimes almost all the time. If the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis) thinks that the government is organized enough to handle that, perhaps he should give it more thought.

● (1642)

Can the dexterous government House leader rise on the spur of the moment, indicate disagreement, and receive a unanimous affirmative vote from his backbenchers so that the matter can be debated for the following 15 or 20 minutes? That is asking more than the government is capable of providing.

Motions under Standing Order 43 were introduced to safeguard the House and prevent explosions when emotions were high. This procedure has many safeguards, time limit being one. When I first came to this chamber, oral questions consisted of one, two or three questions. On other days no government business was done because oral questions continued until the House adjourned.

There was no time limit until 1964 or 1965. If the opposition did not like what the government was doing, it rose on a question of privilege and debated the subject. If Mr. Speaker ruled on whether it was a proper question of privilege, then the Chair was challenged, and there was a four or five-hour debate on whether Mr. Speaker was correct in arriving at his decision. The government House leader remembers those days when there was considerable opportunity for sometimes frivolous, violent, and less than truthful use of privileges. A solution to this problem was reached when opposition members were provided with 15 minutes to present motions under Standing Order 43.

I do not know how other parties make use of this procedure. Perhaps their bright boys from research and other departments engineer their motions under Standing Order 43. In the New Democratic Party it is one of the few things which have been left to the discretion of individual backbenchers. If I am entirely out of touch with my party and do not agree, I can rise and raise a matter of urgent and pressing necessity under Standing Order 43. Perhaps it is a matter which is of concern to my constituents, or even of national importance.

This Standing Order has been used by independent members as well. One must remember that they are growing more rapidly than any other party in the House. Not long ago there were no independent members. Now there are four or five such