

Point of Order—Mr. Hnatyshyn

without debate. In fact, as I recall it, it was seconded by a member on the government side of the House, thus showing there was all party support for the motion which would be accepted without debate. I would like to be charitable and believe that the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) did not know of that agreement because, if he did know it, what happened was in violation of the agreement which was generally understood.

The other aspect which concerns me very much is that when motions are presented it must be a rule in the House that there should be equal opportunity given to members on both sides of the House to make a fair statement on the issue. The fact that by this particular interpretation of the rules there is to be no equitable sharing in the expression of opinion strikes me as being in defiance of both the spirit and practice of the rules, and I think that should be unacceptable to all members of the House.

The third thing that strikes me as being a very strange anomaly is that the particular motion refers to an event today, and it was the understanding that because of the importance of that motion it would be passed by the House as an expression of support for the 1812 committee and what they represent to the broad cross-section of the artistic and cultural community of this country. To have it stood over for some eventual debate, which might not even take place later, surely makes a farce of the whole motion. Such action would undermine the spirit of what I thought the Secretary of State was supporting. I find it strange that by his speaking he would want to prevent the House from adopting a motion which he said he was supporting, not only in his brief remarks but in answering the questions that followed. I am surprised that the parliamentary secretary says it would be ridiculous to give an opportunity for an expression. Without that expression surely the House is not in a position to adopt the motion, and that would be against the interests of us all.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the debate which has taken place on this point and I think it serves to underline further the unsatisfactory operation of Standing Order 43. You might recall that last week I raised a point of order when the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) proposed a motion under Standing Order 43 which I regarded to be replete with false allegations, because in the normal course of events it would not be possible for members on this side of the House to indicate the fallacy of the statements in his motion. It is for that reason that I raised the point of order on motions under Standing Order 43 and that, at your suggestion, sir, the debate was deferred.

I have been away, and today the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), who wishes to participate in that debate, is absent. At his suggestion we have deferred the debate on the broad operation of Standing Order 43.

I could not agree more with the statement that was made by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Jones) who urged that in the operation of our Standing Orders there should be a sense

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

of fairness and a sense of natural justice. It is to that point that I wish to address myself when later I make my argument on the broad operation of the Standing Order, and I was delighted to hear the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) refer to the necessity of our proceedings being fair and providing an opportunity to reply when allegations are made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Yes, when motions are debated.

Mr. MacEachen: Often there is a long preamble to a motion before consent is asked. However, you can say yes or no to the motion, but you never have an opportunity to reply to the false allegations made in these increasingly lengthy motions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Members of the opposition have laid the groundwork for my argument when they have urged equity, natural justice, and fairness in the operations of our proceedings. I assure you, sir, if there was unfairness today—

An hon. Member: Poor Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: —if there was unfairness today because one member of the House was unable to speak on the motion, then it is a sequel to a long succession of unfair episodes under Standing Order 43 when, within the preambles and motions, there are false allegations, personal insults, and political partisanship, with absolutely no opportunity for members of the government to reply.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: If there are complaints on the other side, the complaints are legion on this side, and we shall return to them later when the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton comes to the House.

I would add one point because I regard it as very important. I was not involved in the negotiations on Standing Order 43 today. No member of the opposition approached me with respect to how that motion should be dealt with in the House. I have no personal knowledge of it and therefore I cannot clarify the situation, but I do say that usually when members of the opposition ask for my consent, when the motion is satisfactory I always add the rider "provided there is no debate". I do not know whether or not that was arranged today, that is a matter beyond my knowledge, but I think it is a matter which should be clarified later when those who are involved in the negotiations are present in the House.

That is my introductory comment to the statement I would like to make later when the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton is in the House.

● (1602)

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) sat down before he intended to do