

Tuesday will be an allotted day. On Wednesday we will deal with second reading of the electoral boundaries readjustment bill and we will then resume consideration of Bill C-68.

There will be no ordinary sitting on Thursday but at three o'clock p.m. on that day there will be a joint meeting of both Houses in this Chamber to hear an address by the President of the United States.

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PRIVILEGE

BILL C-68

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege and I appreciate the opportunity to be recognized today.

I take the point of privilege very seriously. After six years and some months in this Chamber I have never risen on a point of privilege, recognizing that to do so would mean that my rights as a member of Parliament were abused or the ability to do my job was somehow impeded by rules of this House or by actions that may have taken place elsewhere.

I rise today on a point of privilege to express my concern that my ability to do my job as a member of Parliament has been impeded by rules and regulations that exist in this place.

A bill before the House at the present time, Bill C-68, the firearms legislation, is a bill that in my constituency and elsewhere across Canada is of great interest. The bill has elicited a tremendous amount of letters and telephone calls over the last few months. The proposals that were brought forward by the government have been out in front of Canadians for several months.

As a result of those proposals being put forward to Canadians I have had a great many telephone calls and letters from my constituents asking to be kept informed of the progress of this bill and when the bill was printed and available in the House to supply those constituents with copies of that bill.

I have compiled a list of names in my constituency and tried to assess the number of letters that I received with regard to this bill.

• (1505)

I have calculated that maybe 200 or 300 copies of the bill would be required for me to distribute to the people who have expressed an interest in responding to this issue in front of all of us to provide me with their comments and backgrounds so that I can properly represent them and to communicate an intelligent review of the bill to the minister and the government.

On doing so I have contacted the Department of Justice for extra copies of the bill to provide to my constituents. I am told

by the Department of Justice that I am limited to a handful of copies of the bill.

I contacted distribution of the House of Commons and I am told that there is a limited supply of the bill, that very few can be available to me. Only after all members are done getting their limited supply will I be able to have access to the few copies that would be left over.

Finally I took the bill along with a letter and some newspaper clippings to printing this morning to ask if it could produce some copies so that I could keep my constituents informed as they requested about the contents of this important bill.

I am told by printing that it cannot do it because the rules of the House of Commons specify that if the bill is available elsewhere, it cannot print it.

We have exhausted all the possibilities of the bill being available elsewhere. I do not want to be embarrassed in front of my constituents by being unable to provide them with copies of bills that I am debating in this Chamber.

I ask that my question of privilege be examined by the House and at the very least that I and members of Parliament who require copies of this bill to keep our constituents informed be allowed to have printed enough copies to satisfy our demands.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although I doubt that this is a question of privilege the issue brought to the attention of the House by the member is an important one.

A number of my own colleagues have approached me in my position as whip on the same issue. Perhaps more appropriately it would be a matter for the Board of Internal Economy to consider. If either that member or another member can make a formal request that we do that you, Mr. Speaker, and I and others who sit on that board could look at this issue and how to accommodate it.

For this to be a question of privilege, I suppose a member would have to be denied access to the information which of course he is not. There is a fee, quite a hefty one, for obtaining copies of the bill. I am informed that it is in the area of \$10 a copy.

It is more appropriately a matter to be discussed by our board as an expenditure of the House. Perhaps in so doing we could see what we could do to accommodate at least some of the members or accommodate all members with a quantity of some sort to satisfy the demand that is expressed by this member and others who have brought it to my attention as well.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of my hon. friend but recognizing that, it might be some time before the Board of Internal Economy would have an opportunity to address this. The matter is rather urgent. The legislation is before the House now.