

statement on motions—one not relating to Standing Order 41(2)—at which time opposition members would have an opportunity to make statements.

My suggestion to hon. members again is that when we extend the rules we become involved in difficulties such as the one we now have. If a question during the question period is accompanied by a statement or prefaced with an allegation of fact, the question is really out of order. An individual member putting a question which includes a statement of fact or an allegation may be unhappy when the minister argues a case or makes a statement in reply to the allegations of the hon. member. Again, I would say that both the question and the answer are out of order.

It is when members try to use the rules to their advantage as members that the House and the whole system get into difficulty. I invite hon. members to try to respect the rules as much as possible, to try to follow them as closely as possible, and to discipline themselves to respect not only the letter but the spirit of the rules which have been proclaimed for the efficient operation of this institution.

This has been a somewhat unhappy incident, I would hope it would guide members and the Chair in future situations.

Mr. Lundrigan: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accept Your Honour's ruling with great respect, as I always do. However, may I say that even though we do not have the Dominion Bureau of Statistics as a backup to our research system we do have a competent research office, and on the basis of Your Honour's ruling I assume it will be acceptable for us to table in the House on Monday a statement prepared by our research office.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would think the hon. member would have to have the rules amended in the meantime. Perhaps that might be done over the weekend.

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POLLUTION

SPRINGHILL MINE DUMP FIRE—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland-Colchester North): Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent of the House to put a motion under Standing Order 43 on a matter of urgent and pressing importance. The residents of the town of Springhill have been suffering from the effects of a mine dump fire since 1965. This fire is presently burning over an area of some 45 to 50 acres at a depth of from 40 to 60 feet. On a wet, humid or snowy day the fire pollutes the whole town of Springhill and the surrounding area.

A number of investigations have been carried out into the effect of this pollution and the means whereby this mine dump fire can be extinguished. An investigation has been under way by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources since early last year, which was supposed to

Pollution

have been completed by September of last year but has not been completed to date. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has informed me that the information contained in this report will not be made available to the public. Since this pollution could well affect the health and lives of the people of the town of Springhill, numbering some 7,500, I move that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Environmental Pollution.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a point of order immediately in connection with this motion. I do so, I hope, in the spirit of the ruling you made a few moments ago and in an effort to co-operate.

I appreciate the importance of the matter the hon. member raises and the effect his recital has on our feelings, but it does illustrate the difficulty that arises if an hon. member is permitted to give what I consider to be a rather substantial description of a problem and then ask leave to make a motion and confront the government with a decision as to whether it should acquiesce or reject the request at this time. Surely it is putting the government in a very difficult position if its only response on an occasion of this kind is to say yes or no. It could be interpreted by the people affected as indifference to their problem.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: That is far from being the case, because the government is sympathetic toward those who may be affected by these circumstances. However, I believe that if it is possible for an hon. member to make an extensive explanation of the reasons for placing a motion before the House it ought also to be possible for the government to consider the situation and make an extensive explanation of the circumstances which make it possible or not possible to give leave for the motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacEachen: Otherwise the situation that is developing under this Standing Order will go from bad to worse and lead to a most unsatisfactory position, in fact, to the very difficulty to which the Chair drew attention a few moments ago.

Mr. Speaker: I hope we do not become involved in a repetition of what took place a few moments ago, but I will hear the hon. member for Cumberland-Colchester North.

Mr. Coates: I think there are one or two questions which should be clarified. The President of the Privy Council intimated that this was the first time the information contained in my statement had been provided to the government as a basis for reaching a definite decision. In the first place, I stated the facts of the situation in as concise a manner as I could. There was nothing partisan at all in what I said.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!