

Clause 5 states:

Every petition and answer shall be printed as an appendix or supplement to the *Votes and Proceedings* of the day on which it is presented or made.

Clause 3 states:

Within two weeks of the presentation of the petition to either House of Parliament, a statement in answer to it shall be made in the House by a Member of Her Majesty's Privy Council or by a Member of Parliament acting for him.

Part of this is already in place and can be done. As I said, the opportunity is provided in Question Period when a Minister responsible for a particular area can be questioned very closely for a response to what has been done about a specific request contained in a petition.

● (1730)

As previous speakers have stated this afternoon, I agree that there is no question we have all experienced frustrations and have directly suffered from the system. While Parliament is a great institution and our system is the best in the free world, they can always be improved. We are dedicated to working toward adopting acceptable improvements which will bring us into the 1980s so that we will be truly representative of the people and carry out the work they have entrusted us to do. There is no doubt that we must be ever conscious and aware of our responsibilities in this regard and take every opportunity to improve the process so that we have a more efficient and smoother system in terms of our parliamentary duties and activities.

I have enumerated some of the opportunities which are already in place. They can be used by each and every Member of Parliament. Certainly these avenues can be utilized with respect to petitions. Of course there is always a need to give a word of caution. Whenever we are discussing topics such as the one relating to petitions, we know that there will always be abuse in our system. We have witnessed to date abuses in the House with respect to the motivations of petitions, the manner in which they have been obtained and the manner in which they have been presented to the House.

Mr. Benjamin: Be careful, or I will have a question of privilege.

Mr. Harquail: I hear the Hon. Member commenting on what I have said. I did not interrupt him when he expressed his views. The Hon. Member will recall that he made reference to grain rates in his speech. Not long ago the New Democratic Party attempted to trample over the proceedings of the House, showing complete disrespect for the Speaker and for the rules of the House, by bringing in Crow petitions and acting totally contrary to the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege, let alone a point of order. The Chair ruled several

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days ago that Hon. Members in this corner of the House were perfectly entitled to present whatever number of petitions they had. I take exception to the Hon. Member calling that trampling on the rules or abusing the House of Commons. We did nothing more than exercise our rights, and this was confirmed by the Speaker. I would like the Hon. Member to recognize that and say so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Did the Hon. Member rise on a question of privilege or a point of order?

Mr. Benjamin: I said both, just to be on the safe side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The matter he raised would be more aptly described as a point of order. Hon. Members, in referring to their other colleagues in the House, should be very careful not to impute motive or to suggest the same. Of course it would be against honourable parliamentary practice to proceed in that fashion. Therefore I caution all Hon. Members to be very careful in their choice of words in that respect.

Mr. Harquail: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with your remarks. I was not imputing anything and I never would. I was expressing an opinion. When the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) used his time in this democratic institution, I did not interrupt him. There is a possibility from time to time that interest groups will sign petitions, for whatever reason. We are free to judge their motives for bringing in petitions and drafting them. Who signs them and whether they are properly signed is left for us to judge.

Returning to my argument with regard to abuse, I must say that I invite the Hon. Member to participate in the debate. That is what this place is all about. If I give my view and the Hon. Member does not like it, he can debate it with me. I welcome that. It is exactly what we are supposed to do here. Let me remind the Hon. Member that the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) brought in a large obstacle; I do not know how to describe it. It was a painted crow.

Mr. Benjamin: A piece of plywood.

Mr. Harquail: He is an experienced Member of the House. He knew the rules. These were not his first days in the House of Commons, but I suggest with respect to petitions regarding grain rates, that he was, in whatever terminology one wants to use, trampling on, interfering with and abusing the rules of the House of Commons.

Mr. Benjamin: The Speaker dealt with that.

Mr. Harquail: We cannot condone that; we cannot agree to it and allow it to happen. With all due respect to the New Democratic Party and with all due regard for its rights, we cannot go that far and allow its Members to do that. In our daily duties we have to be steadfast and be on watch to defend