

*Points of Order*

• (1120)

Your Honour will recognize that over the past several months we have attempted in this House to ask the Government constantly, publicly and in Parliament to share its knowledge and information, to tell us what the demands were, what the negotiated stances were and what those unacceptable essential ingredients were that were the stalling point in the talks. It is very important that information be shared with Canadians.

It is our understanding that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) or his Ministers spoke to the provincial Premiers. It would seem, for the honour and dignity of this House, that we should be given the same opportunity to understand at least what it is and why it is that the Government has taken this drastic and Draconian step.

I simply bring to your attention, Sir, that there is no other opportunity other than the time afforded to us in Question Period, and while that is an event of great interest and undertaking, it is not always designed to get the fullest exposure of ideas or the proper dialogue. There is no Bill in the House that will allow us to debate the subject. No opposition days have been called and we have no opportunity at this immediate time to address this very crucial and very singular issue.

It is also fair to say that there is no topic dominating the Canadian consciousness more at the present time than this, and there is no question respecting our international standing with greater significance. Therefore I think the matter is very clearly an issue for Parliament to exercise its rightful obligations, and this is the forum where the proper expression and exposure can take place.

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to thank both the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) and the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) for bringing the matter to the Chair's attention yesterday and for their comments this morning.

As Hon. Members know, the reform committee insisted that it was inappropriate for Speakers to give reasons for their decisions on these applications. I might say to Hon. Members that that does not mean that within the head of the Speaker there are no reasons. Naturally, these decisions are not made on a whimsical basis.

I have given this matter a great deal of consideration and I agree with both Hon. Members that the issue is of extreme importance. At the moment it is not my disposition to order an emergency debate for today, but that does not mean it might not be ordered at some other time. I think it is fair to say that I might be in a better position to consider the matter again after today's proceedings.

**POINTS OF ORDER****ALLEGED FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH S. O. 99(2)—MR. SPEAKER'S RULING**

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to draw to the attention of Hon. Members that the Chair is now ready to rule on a point of order raised on August 12, 1987, by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) about the Government's response to the report of the Special Committee on Child Care and the point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone) on September 9 last relating to the Government's response to the fifth and sixth reports of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. Because both points of order deal with the interpretation of Standing Order 99(2) the Chair wishes to comment on both points in the same ruling, but because of certain differences of form and content, I will deal with them in the order in which they were raised.

On August 12, the Hon. Member for Hamilton East took the position that the document tabled by the Minister of National Health and Welfare in response to the Special Committee on Child Care and entered in *Votes and Proceedings* of Tuesday, August 11, 1987, did not meet the requirements of Standing Order 99(2) which reads as follows:

Within 150 days of the presentation of a report from a standing or special committee, the government shall, upon the request of the committee, table a comprehensive response thereto.

The Hon. Member for Hamilton East claimed that the response of the Minister was interim in nature and did not fulfil the essential condition of the standing order that it be comprehensive. A number of other Hon. Members expressed the same concern.

*[Translation]*

The question before the Chair is whether the Minister's response adequately meets the requirements of the Standing Orders, namely whether or not it is a comprehensive response. This is not the first time the Chair has been asked to rule on the quality of a Government response. In earlier rulings on similar points of order the Chair expressed the view that the very fact of establishing what constitutes a comprehensive response would be tantamount to ruling on the acceptability of the response, something which the Chair simply cannot do.

*[English]*

There are, however, certain details of this matter which differentiate it from previous cases. The Chair has read the letter from the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp). It plainly states at the beginning that it is an "interim response" and goes on in the second to last paragraph to affirm that a "comprehensive announcement" on the National Strategy on Child Care will be made in the fall. In essence, this is an open admission that the response in question is not as comprehensive as required by the terms of Standing Order 99(2).

The Chair finds itself in some difficulty on this matter since there has obviously been a specific and clear breach of rules by