

*Point of Order—Mr. Lewis*

[Translation]

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question enumerated by the Parliamentary Secretary has been answered. Shall the remaining question stand?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[English]

## POINT OF ORDER

POWERS OF COMMITTEE UNDER STANDING ORDER—  
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

**Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a very brief point of order with respect to the Tenth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts which was tabled yesterday. You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that this is the first opportunity I have had to raise this point of order. It is not a long one. I would just seek some direction from the Chair.

The Committee has asked for a Government response to a recommendation on page 3 of its report pursuant to Standing Order 99(2). We have reviewed the Standing Order and it would be our thinking and feeling that the Committee only has the power to ask for a response to the Committee Report in total. The Government side is actually just seeking direction from the Chair as to whether or not it is in order for a committee to ask for a Government response to a portion of a report rather than the entire report.

Perhaps the Table and yourself can take this under advisement and give us some direction at a later date. It is certainly not an urgent point at this time.

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments. We are dealing with two distinct legal persons; one is an agent of Parliament, the reference of this Commission, which has been the witness before the committee and which has been asked to table reports in writing by September 30; the other is the Government's response to the cut-backs in the Public Service and an update every three months of how we are doing with the cut-backs. Standing Order 99(2) applies to the Government's action, that is, Treasury Board's implementation of the policy of the Government. The other one applies to an agent of Parliament which, through the Secretary of State, answers to us in the House.

I would ask Your Honour to possibly see the difference between a report of a committee reporting on an agent of Parliament, that is, the Public Service Commission, and the same report requesting the Government to tell us what is happening on one of its Department's actions in regard to its program of cut-backs in the Public Service. There is a distinction.

I understand the point which is being made. However, I do think the Committee was right in asking the Government for its response as separate from the other request made of the Commission for it to table in writing with the Committee by September 30, if I remember correctly, some of the update on its appointment methods and how it is going to improve the auditing of those appointments. I think there is a request here that is possibly *bona fide* and in order.

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might make an unusual request, that an opportunity be given at a later time to make submissions on this point of order, given that it could well have far reaching consequences? It appears to take on some technical questions which really require some research before any intelligent intervention could be made. I would seek from you, Sir, that perhaps no ruling be made at the moment and an opportunity be provided later for an intervention, at least by myself, after I have had an opportunity to review the matter in its entirety.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I think the comments of my hon. colleague make a good deal of sense. Our point was not as to substance but as to form. Standing Order 99(2) states:

Within 120 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.

We are simply seeking direction so we know exactly what we are being asked to respond to in the future. As my colleague states, this the first time we have had this particular situation arise and I think we would all like to set a good precedent which could be followed with ease by all Members of the House in the future.

**Mr. Speaker:** Obviously, I will reserve. Perhaps I might ask Hon. Members who would like to make further submissions would Monday be suitable?

**Mr. Deans:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is Monday at eleven o'clock a good time?

**Mr. Deans:** That would be excellent.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am happy to reserve. May I ask those who are going to intervene to consider a matter which the Chair will have to consider, that is, would the effect of what the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary is saying be that committees would in effect be required to submit reports clause by clause? I would like that point addressed, if that is possible.