

Point of Order—Mr. MacEachen

House on the success thereof? Did not the humour make the point?

Mr. Francis: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the kind of thing with which we have to deal now.

Allegations put on the record without the opportunity for anyone on the government side to reply, represent the fourth line of abuse. We have seen a number of examples of this. I have one in front of me now. On December 8 the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton moved a resolution which would have been acceptable—

Mr. Alexander: What year?

Mr. Francis: December 8, 1977. The resolution is recorded at page 1671 of *Hansard*. The wording of the resolution was as follows:

That this House strongly condemns the government of the Soviet Union for violating the provisions of the Helsinki Accord in its imprisonment of Anatoly Shcharansky.

So far so good. Had the motion stopped there, I am sure, that there would have been unanimous support, but then the hon. member added the following:

This House further condemns the Prime Minister and his government for failing to show more concern for the rights of individuals in countries like the Soviet Union.

The hon. member knew that there would not have been the remotest possibility that hon. members on this side would accept that totally false allegation. If the hon. member had really wanted to have unanimous support for his resolution, he would not have incorporated that wording in the resolution. If his objective was to get an expression of sympathy for Shcharansky, he would have gone about it in a different way. I submit his objective was the TV camera, and I think he did it very effectively for his purpose on that day. But it causes a problem, Mr. Speaker. The problem relates to the response on the government side. The government side has the option of saying no.

● (1632)

I listened with great attention to my friend, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, and I kept asking myself: is he asking for a change in the rule, for the abolition of the requirement for unanimous consent? I really do not know. Having listened to his speech, I think he seemed to be arguing that Mr. Speaker should determine whether the motion was urgent. If the motion were deemed, in your opinion, sir, to be urgent, he seemed to say that it should be allowed to be put. But he carefully skirted the question of unanimous consent.

On another occasion his leader in the House argued that the procedure used by the hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Pinard) in rejecting motions on behalf of the government by refusing unanimous consent, was an irregularity, was something totally wrong. He implied that the hon. member for Drummond did this automatically. Well, there are motions that have been accepted by the House, and that is the proof that it is not done automatically. There are a number of them

and I have the list here, which I will not read. My friend, the hon. member for Windsor-Walkerville (Mr. MacGuigan), had one not long ago which was unanimously accepted.

Surely the point which the hon. member has to face is whether or not he is asking for a change in the rule with regard to unanimous consent.

Then I think we must look at the consequences. If members on the other side or on this side have the right to put a motion which is deemed to be urgent and which meets the criteria set out in Standing Order 43 so as to have it debated, then what follows? I think that when totally false allegations are placed on the record, it is a temptation for members on this side to say yes and then rise to put the record straight. That will mean there will not be another motion under Standing Order 43 put that day. Maybe we should adopt that as a tactic; it might change the procedures with regard to members on the other side if the first such motion with a totally false allegation were accepted, if we debated it and attempted to answer the allegation, because then there would be no more motions under Standing Order 43 until 2.15. Then we would have the whole problem of the interpretation of the rule.

I submit that the rule is abundantly clear. You, sir, have interpreted it correctly and fairly, in my opinion. Standing Order 45(2) says that such a motion should be placed under government orders. That is what happened the last time the motion was put and the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts) spoke until 2.15.

If hon. members on the other side want to change those rules, they should put a motion for a referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. If they want to change Standing Order 45(2) to say that the debate be not interrupted at 2.15 but that it be continued at some other time, then we must face the problem which my friend, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre pointed out, that is, when should the debate be resumed? The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was much more explicit on March 8 of this year in the House, and he put it so nicely that I could not possibly choose better words. He said:

The difficulty, as I see it, is this: the government, as has been said today—and I agree—must have arrangements by which it can put its business before the House. There has to be a schedule which cannot be upset or interrupted in an unplanned way. I support that position. But it is also true that private members of the House ought to have an opportunity to present their ideas.

He went on to say:

It seems to me if we are to solve the difficulty of getting the proper balance between the government's rights and the rights of opposition members we shall have to find a means to get the government business through a little faster.

I could not agree more with the very concise, clear, and logical statement of the dilemma. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said we must find the time for the debate. When? What time is available? Let us just look at the opportunities that private members have. They were well recited by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, but he missed one or two. He referred to private members' motions, private members' bills, question period, and the adjournment debate. There is also the opportunity under