

Government Orders

[English]

REPORT BY LABOUR CANADA

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order that the Secretary of State for External Affairs just raised, can I take his comments to mean that the report now is a public document and that people are free to comment? Are copies available to all members, other than those he referred to specifically?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, they certainly will be. It is intended to be a public document. This was intended to be a process as undertaken by the government, to make that document public today.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, being Thursday, I would like the government House leader—I think I can guess what he is going to say—in keeping with the practices of this House, to tell us what the order of business is for tomorrow.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, it really depends on when tomorrow starts, at midnight or 10 a.m. tomorrow. We will dispose of Motion 30 some time today or tomorrow; this sitting, let me put it that way, and then it would be my intention to call the adjournment motion for tomorrow. I guess any future will depend on what happens with the adjournment motion.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p.19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p.19156).

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, this debate, even under the best political circumstances in normal political times, I submit to you would be a difficult one. As the history of Parliament shows, parlia-

mentary rule changes are always a topic that is received with great suspicion by whichever party is in the opposition, quite rightly and understandably so. It is the role of the opposition in the British parliamentary system to keep the government honest and to play the basic role of a watchdog on the activities, the actions and the decisions of the government of the day.

• (1510)

Unfortunately, this task is made more difficult for two reasons; first is the nature of the proposal the government is advancing, which has been dealt with by colleagues and which I will deal with in a moment and second, because of the low popularity and the low esteem in which the government finds itself across the country in the opinion of Canadians.

The credibility of the government is at the present, as is shown by a variety of recent polls, extremely low. The credibility of the leader of this government is even worse. What accompanies this phenomenon is the fact that the popularity in the polls of this government is way behind that of the other two major parties. Political analysts are informing us that in the history of taking public opinion polls, the Prime Minister's popularity, at 16 per cent, has never been as low as it is at the present time.

One could even venture to forecast that if an election were called and held 60 days from today, the government party would be extremely lucky if it were to play the role of the official opposition as a result of such an election. Most likely, it would be in third position at best. This is because of the considerable erosion in popularity the Conservative Party is undergoing, as witnessed both in the west as well as in Quebec. Therefore, I submit to you that this government lacks the moral authority that accompanies credibility.

In asking that a package of new rules be accepted and adopted by this House, the government is really asking the impossible. It is requesting the acceptance of a package whose substance is very controversial and it lacks the needed authority to assert its viewpoint. It only has the numbers when it comes to a vote. That is the use of force, rather than the use of reason in parliamentary terms.

It is against this rather depressing political snapshot that I just gave the House that we are debating today the merits and the disadvantages of this package.