

Point of Order—Mr. Clark

excited, but I have always bowed to your wishes and your directives. I will do so again. But I do want to say, Madam Speaker, that the respect we hold for you is based on the fact you are the trustee, the custodian, the guarantor of the rights of members, not the rights of a majority government that believes, as the government House leader said the other day, that it does not matter about Beauchesne and tradition, as long as they have the numbers they can do anything they want. I say this to you, Madam Speaker, very seriously, and I have never said anything like this before, since I have been in the House, this House is not a happy place right now—

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Fraser: It is not a happy place for reasons we all understand. We are trying to do our duty. It depends very much on the conduct of members and the confidence we have in how things are done in this House whether we do our duty appropriately in the interest of the Canadian people, or we are just completely stampeded by a majority that has gone absolutely mad in getting a proposition through before the Quebec election is ended, before the Canadian people have had a chance to know what is going on.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, the member for Fraser Valley, as I recall, said this is not a happy place, and he is absolutely right.

An hon. Member: Vancouver South!

Mr. Deans: The hon. member for Vancouver South, I apologize.

Mr. Fraser: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has a point of order to make on the intervention of the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) when he has not spoken yet.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, I have a very brief point of order to make, and that is that I would hope the hon. member would respect the rules of this House and refer to me as the hon. member for Vancouver South.

Mr. Deans: I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Respect the House by sitting down!

Mr. Deans: The hon. member for Nepean-Carleton tells me to respect the House by sitting down. That is advice which he might well take himself from time to time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, since the bell stopped ringing something in the order of 47 minutes have elapsed. I want to suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that the proceedings in 46 of those minutes were quite out of order. I do not understand how

we can be dealing with points of order in the middle of the daily routine proceedings. What can possibly be out of order during the daily routine proceedings as long as the proceedings are followed in sequence?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: I sincerely regret that my Conservative colleagues cannot continue their filibuster. I regret it for their sake. But, for the sake of the House, had they been here at eight o'clock they could have continued.

If I understand correctly what has happened this evening, we have reached the point in the daily routine proceedings where we should be hearing statements by ministers. If my understanding is correct, then at this point nothing can possibly be out of order.

I therefore ask you, Madam Speaker, in the interest of the House and the protection of all the members of it, that you call the next order of business.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2050)

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Lincoln): Madam Speaker, I think this is a very important point of order, a very important time in debate. What appalled me, when listening to hon. members opposite, was the premise that somehow or other the Speaker of the House is responsible for the ineptitude of the House leader of the opposition. It is not the responsibility of the Speaker of the House of Commons to phone or inquire whether the opposition wants to continue with the point of privilege or the point of order they were debating at five o'clock.

As I recall the event, at the time the hon. Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. Clark: Right hon., Bryce.

Mr. Mackasey: The right hon. leader. I apologize because I respect the courtesies of the House and I do respect the right hon. leader as a former prime minister.

At five o'clock the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) had an opportunity to continue the debate on that issue. Yes, I am certain he did. The important point, Madam Speaker, is that you should not be dragged into honest differences of opinion between the government and the opposition. Your job is that of custodian of the rules; your prestige and the effectiveness and efficiency of the House of Commons depends upon your impartiality. Your impartiality would not last very long if you had to cover up for the ineptitude of one side or the other. If there was no one on his feet at eight to continue the point raised at five o'clock, or that was debated at five o'clock, that was not the fault of the Speaker.

I remember very vividly that in 1968 in this very chamber the government of the day was defeated on a very important motion because at two or three or four minutes after eight o'clock, sitting quietly in their places, waiting for the speaker who was to participate, the member who was to carry on the