

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond on a point of order.

Mr. MacInnis: We have just had an example of what this government is doing to the rules of this House. I refer once again to the deliberate absence of ministers from the House which removes the urgency from important questions many hon. members on this side wish to put. I also refer to the answer the Prime Minister has just given in response to a question of privilege brought up previously. According to the rules of this House, it is too late now for him to speak to the same question in that he allowed time to elapse and there have been two points of order in between.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Of course I am not going to become involved in this.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, if there was not unanimous consent for the Minister of Labour to revert to motions to make a statement—

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Or was there?

Mr. Speaker: There was not at that point. However, I am at the service of the House and I will inquire again whether there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent to revert to motions?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I object. A few moments ago, when you asked whether there was unanimous agreement, some government members refused to give their consent. I do not see why we should now give ours.

Mr. Speaker: Obviously, the House is not unanimous.

[*English*]

There is not unanimous consent. The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Lotbinière on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, on this point, I should like most humbly to point out that my hon. colleague from Abitibi raised the point before the hon. member for Sainte-Marie and that consequently, according to the Standing Orders, his question should have been put before that of the hon. member for Sainte-Marie. Since attempts made so far to obtain unanimous consent were not in keeping with the Standing Orders and since we insist on obtaining this information we would most humbly ask you to call for unanimous consent again.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I asked, hardly ten seconds ago, I believe, whether there was unanimous consent. The hon. member cannot logically be suggesting that I spend the

[*Mr. MacInnis.*]

whole afternoon calling for unanimous consent. I have done so twice. I will make a third attempt.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is no unanimity.

[*English*]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, if, as you have ruled, there was not unanimous consent to revert to motions so that the minister could make a statement, I wonder whether there would be unanimous consent to revert to motions so that the minister could at least lay on the table the Order in Council that he was seeking to read?

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the minister to table the document?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As recorded on page 10453 of *Hansard* yesterday, my colleague from Abitibi asked that question of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and the latter assured my colleague and the House that the minister would have the appropriate answer prepared for today. This can be done in one way or another, either on motions or by merely providing the answer. Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have taken 10 or 15 minutes of the valuable time of the House to ask whether there was unanimous consent about the matter raised by the member for Lotbinière for the third or fourth time. There is no unanimous consent.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to think at this time, in view of the importance of the statement that the minister wishes to make—I say this with all humility and respect to you—perhaps we could get unanimous consent for the minister to give the statement, primarily because—

An hon. Member: Oh, come on.

Mr. Alexander: You keep your big mouth shut.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest very kindly to the hon. member for Hamilton West that we have had a number of members suggest that we revert to motions. For this we must have unanimous consent, and each time the Chair has inquired whether there was such consent there has not been unanimity. May we have order, please? I am wondering whether it is conducive to the decorum of the House to continue for a good part of the afternoon by inquiring every two minutes or so, on the initiative of different members, whether there is unanimous consent. I think that is an abuse of the process of this House.