

Government Orders

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, on a short point of order, I must say that I reflected on an incident that occurred earlier this afternoon. While the vote was being taken I, being late for the vote, walked into the House of Commons during the vote count. I simply want to seek clarification from Madam Chair whether that is parliamentary practice, or whether that is unparliamentary, because nothing we do here would we want to be considered unparliamentary.

I am seeking clarification if the action that I carried out was in fact parliamentary, and whether it is acceptable behaviour.

Mr. Barrett: Madam Speaker, you place this House in a difficult situation. You are suggesting by your tentative, non-ruling that you are telling us that you will go and check it out and come back with an answer, but in the meantime the 10 minute question period is lost. I do not think that is adequate from the Chair and I will tell you why. We need a clear-cut ruling based on precedent right now. If it is necessary for the Chair to take a five-minute recess to get a ruling, I suggest that, rather than going on something tentative until we know what we are doing, I ask the Chair to take a recess and check it out.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca (Mr. Barrett) appears to attribute to the Chair a kind of innate knowledge it does not have.

The Chair felt that it was better not to create a precedent, and after so advising the House, the Chair decided to recognize the hon. member for Calgary West.

I can give the hon. member the assurance that once the results of our inquiries are known, if the debate is still in process, and those results prove that the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt (Mr. Whittaker) should have the benefit of this ten-minute period for questions and comments, he will then be recognized, even if it is later on.

For the time being, I think the matter is closed, and I will again recognize the hon. member for Calgary West.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Hawkes: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to begin—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I have recognized the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

Mr. Tobin: Madam Speaker, I wanted to say to the Speaker that we on this side of the House do not like the GST. We are not always happy nor do we celebrate the rule of the Chair on any given day on any given issue. Frequently we are disappointed. But at the end of the day, having had a fair hearing, we expect that the rule of the Chair, whether we like it, celebrate it, or not, has to be upheld.

I would say to colleagues, whose view of the GST I share, that we have to be cautious in this place, beyond making our point, about challenging the authority of the Chair. I say this because I believe it is important. If members are to challenge the authority of the Chair, beyond making a strong case, then let it be a direct challenge. If not, let us be careful and respect the institution.

I go further, Madam Speaker. It is up to the Speaker to ensure that the integrity of the Chair is protected as well by not allowing silly challenges.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The hon. member from Kamloops on a point of order.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I believe that your elaboration now in terms of a decision that will be forthcoming and if you find it appropriate, you will then see the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt as having a 10-minute question and comment period is more than reasonable and we accept that, Madam Speaker.

However, I also would remind you of the point that I raised, simply to seek clarification. During the voting I entered the House of Commons, and I am simply requesting information—

Mr. Kempling: You did it on purpose.

Mr. Riis: I did it on purpose, Madam Speaker. If it is unparliamentary, then I certainly would be the first to apologize for doing something I ought not to have done.