

Oral Questions

Economy has never, ever seen the regulations that were introduced by Order in Council by this government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops will put his question.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of fine words in the last little while from this government about how wonderful it is that the people of eastern Europe have thrown off the chains of oppression. Yet yesterday in front of the Parliament of Canada, that belongs to the people of Canada not the Tory government, we saw a priest, who was standing in a silent vigil, dragged away by police.

Since these people are simply exercising their constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, I am asking the government House Leader if he would now do the honourable thing, since he did it in secret, he did it behind closed doors, he did not alert his own caucus, and admit that this is a government initiative and withdraw this initiative.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I read into the record, as reported at page 9468 of *Hansard*, that the regulations in place were as a result of a letter from yourself, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Board of Internal Economy which, on November 22 by way of minutes, which I also read into the record, and the House Leader of the New Democratic Party was there, unanimously asked that Mr. Speaker write a letter asking for regulations under the Public Works Nuisance Regulations that would in fact provide freedom from harassment and freedom from obstruction for all persons accessing the House of Commons.

The House Leader of the New Democratic Party comes back from two weeks in England and declares himself surprised that what he asked for has been implemented.

• (1430)

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, as the government Whip clearly indicated in this House yesterday, the purpose of the legislation was to allow emergency vehicles access. That was the Board of Internal Economy's concern, that emergency vehicles did not have access.

Was the priest who was arrested by the police yesterday, jailed overnight and in court this morning, obstructing emergency vehicles from accessing the House of Commons?

Mr. Nystrom: Arresting a priest, come on!

An hon. member: Answer that.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, as I read Beaudesne's, the hon. member just asked me for a legal opinion. All I can say, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: All I can say is to repeat—

Mr. Riis: What a phoney.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, all I can—

An hon. member: Where is Doug Lewis when you need him?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I had indicated yesterday, in response to the House Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, that I would certainly think it would be appropriate for this matter to be brought back to the Board of Internal Economy for reconsideration. I will repeat that today to the hon. member. I would make one request and that is that this time if the hon. House Leader of the New Democratic Party agrees to something he keeps his word.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, needless to say I will be rising on a question of privilege at the end of Question Period.

I want to refer to the regulations which read that a peace officer or the minister can now walk out in front of Parliament and within a 50-metre radius decide which protester, which member of Parliament handing out literature, which child making loud disruptive noises, perhaps crying, or what person demonstrating with a sign can be requested to leave and, if he or she does not leave, he or she will be arrested.

Yesterday the police or the minister requested that two protesters outside be arrested and jailed. After Question Period, when some of us as members of Parliament will be standing out in that same 50-metre radius and handing out literature in contravention of this