

National Parks Act

Therefore, I would ask for a ruling in respect of the roster system and the predetermined absence of ministers. I call attention to the fact that when the House proceeded with the business today, 19 cabinet ministers were not available for questioning.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**NATIONAL PARKS ACT**AMENDMENTS RESPECTING DEFINITION,
ACQUISITION, ADMINISTRATION, ETC.

The House resumed from Tuesday, February 17, consideration of the motion of Mr. Chrétien that Bill C-152, to amend the National Parks Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West.

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to note that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) does favour us today with his presence, this for the first time since we have been considering the bill which he sponsored. I hope that he will remain with us this afternoon to listen to the representations which are going to be made about the bill.

[English]

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the last two days on which this bill was discussed, the minister was not present in this House and his Parliamentary Secretary carried responsibility for the bill. There is no doubt the minister was warned that he would be criticized with regard to this bill. He was in the building at the time; he was not absent from Ottawa. I think because of the very nature of the problem and because it involves—

Mr. Honey: A question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member kindly resume his seat. I understand the Parliamentary Secretary is rising on a question of privilege. He has the floor.

Mr. Honey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member who is speaking knows, if he was here when this matter was last debated or if he read the proceedings in *Hansard*, that

[Mr. MacInnis.]

I am charged with the conduct of this bill by the minister and by the government. That was explained to the right hon. gentleman who used to lead the members of his party, during the debate last week. I think you know, Mr. Speaker, that this responsibility has been entrusted to me by the minister and by the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The Parliamentary Secretary may protest all he wants, but that does not deter me one iota from indicating that, notwithstanding the fact the minister may have entrusted him with the piloting of the bill—I make no reflection on the ability of the Parliamentary Secretary to pilot the bill through—the presence of the minister was required for this particular bill. Nothing the hon. member can say will turn me from that particular point nor will it deter any particular person affected by this bill that is, residents of the province of Alberta. The hon. member who is the Parliamentary Secretary may sit in his comfortable pew here in central Canada not knowing the first blessed thing about the problems of the national parks, and he can insist until Doomsday on his right to pilot the bill through. He can do that but it still does not alter the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the minister was not here.

● (4:00 p.m.)

Personally I think the minister is an extremely amiable and friendly person—able too, and I am not trying to be patronizing when I say that. But he inherited a situation with regard to national parks, particularly the three residential parks in the province of Alberta, that has left him with a traumatic job. That is the simple fact right there; he inherited one bloody mess.

Mr. Greene: Strong talk.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It was and if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) had been in any way involved in this he would be suffering from shell shock, too, had he carried out the policies of the administration with which he was connected. The hon. member for Saint-Maurice (Mr. Chrétien) has inherited some of the problems initiated by his colleague the former minister, now the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Laing), and some of his officials who, frankly, have been a disaster to this country and to the national parks in particular.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.