

Oral Questions

unique ruling on that occasion, a ruling which you yourself, on reflection, had said would come back to haunt the House. It meant that every time there was a legitimate grievance by one side or the other with regard to how the new rules and procedures are being used, you would be appealed to to make a decision.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened carefully to the hon. member, especially because he is referring to a specific order of the Chair. Other members have indicated their wish to rise on a point of order. I may be able to help the House.

I would like the hon. member to tell me exactly what his point of privilege is. What is it somebody has done that is making it impossible for him or others to carry on their duties?

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I certainly intend to do that and will be doing so immediately.

Yesterday, when the government rose on notice of motion to limit report stage and third reading on the goods and services legislation, it severely limited the right of each and every member, whether on the government side or on the opposition side, from entering into any real debate on the issues that were before this House.

Mr. Speaker, if I could refer again to your ruling. Yesterday when you grouped the issues for debate you said, as reported at page 10125 of *Hansard*:

I want to point out that this ruling does not limit debate in a significant way with respect to report stage. I have done some careful calculations and under this ruling there will be 11 debates and 26 votes plus the final vote at report stage for concurrence.

Mr. Speaker, you go on to say that this may be subject to some other rule of the House. The point is that in your ruling yesterday, you allowed us 11 different debates on the different types of amendments that come before this House.

I would submit that the actions that took place in the finance committee severely limited opposition parties to debate amendments at report stage. You are aware that at that particular finance committee, as a result of the ruling by the Chair, upheld by the majority—we do not doubt that—the opposition parties were limited to one minute per amendment.

Mr. Speaker: I am listening carefully and I recognize a grievance when I hear one. But, in respect of the committee, I have already dealt with that in a ruling. I gather what the hon. member is saying, on behalf of other members in the House and himself, is that the use of time allocation in the report stage of the bill is an abusive process amounting to a breach of the privilege of members. Now, if I am leaping ahead please correct me, but I take it that is the point the hon. member is making.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, it is part of the point that I am trying to make in this House and I think it is a matter of not only what happened in the House yesterday, because even before debate had started, even though Orders of the Day had been called and you had made a ruling over the grouping of the amendments for debate, even before any motion had been moved by an opposition member, the government gave its notice to restrict debate on report stage and third reading. This in itself is abhorrent.

This in itself restricts me and other members in this House from having the ability to discuss the amendments that were proposed, and we know that under the ways that this House works, 10 of those 11 groupings will probably never even be started in debate in this House.

I mentioned the committee stage and the ruling of the chair of the finance committee, because this was also related to the study of this particular piece of legislation. It is my submission that the opposition was never given the opportunity at report stage or in committee to debate this important legislation. We were not given any opportunity whatsoever to have a meaningful debate on each and every one of the amendments that we wish to put forward.

My submission, Mr. Speaker, and it relates to the rules of the House, is that under the rules of the House we are to attend the House. We must assume that we attend the House for a purpose, and part of that purpose is to make motions and to have the ability to debate those motions. If we allow committee chairs to continue to limit debate, in a manner which is completely useless, if we are in a situation where, before debate even starts on report stage and third reading, the government is going to cut off debate, then what is the purpose of a member of Parliament attending the House? What is the purpose of a member of Parliament making motions? What is the purpose of having the opportunity to debate if the government is going to deny that opportunity time after