

Veterans Affairs

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I will make it apparent right at the start that I was anxious to speak but I, too, want clarification.

I understand that this debate will go on for a period of one hour and 40 minutes and that the debate has taken up 59 minutes at the first session. I understand that it will continue for another 41 minutes today or until the conclusion of private members' hour.

Because the member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) was recognized by you at the start of this period, and at your discretion, of course, you recognized two other members of the official opposition, but on this side we have not had an opportunity to speak. I particularly want an opportunity to speak because, if you look back through the order papers for the last three Parliaments you will see an identical motion has appeared in my name. I would like to add some remarks in the light of events in 1981.

I suggest, therefore, that you determine whether the time that has already been taken up by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville today forms part of the remaining 41 minutes. If not, that time should be struck from the record, thus allowing at least one more speaker—on this side I would hope, but at your discretion—to use up the period of time previously used by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville. For me, personally, I consider this as a question of privilege now in that I should be given the same opportunity to speak as members of the Official Opposition, three of whom have participated today. I would like you, Mr. Speaker, to determine precisely what time is remaining in this debate and precisely what the procedure is to be that we are going to follow in the remaining ten minutes until six o'clock.

● (1750)

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the issue in this matter is whether a Member of Parliament is entitled to the production of papers. In an era of freedom of information, the government has a bill before a committee now calling for openness in government. That is one issue. My respectful submission is that a member is entitled to the production of papers. The government has indicated it cannot say at this point whether or not it might agree.

The other issue is under the Standing Order my friend for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) referred to; there is a right to have the question put, but that right can be lost if we continue in this debate. It is now nine minutes to six. That private member's right can be lost if we continue. It is wrong for that right to be lost, whatever the confusion. I would like to clear up the confusion. Hopefully I can. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Burlington (Mr. Kempling):

That the question be now put.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could I reply to the point made by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton? The understanding of the Chair is if the vote does not take place, no right is lost because presumably the next time this period comes up in private

members' hour the item would be called and the same rights of the hon. member would prevail.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I respectfully remind the Chair that there is now a motion before the House that the question be now put. I am aware of what you have said, Mr. Speaker, but no one has any guarantee that he will hereafter have the right to have that motion to receive that production. Therefore, it is important. The motion is there. I advanced it seriously in the interests of private members and the production of documents. I ask that you recognize that motion and put the question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair understands that the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton has moved that the question be now put. This is a debatable motion.

Mr. Nielsen: No it isn't.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the point I was going to make, although there are one or two other points I should like to make as well. Hon. members are shouting out right away that, no, it is not debatable. All I have had time to do is pick up Beauchesne's fifth edition and look under "Previous Question" on page 388 and there it is:

Members who spoke on main question may speak again—

There are several references there that can be looked up in Beauchesne. If I may say so, the practice is well known to any of us who have been around here for a while that the motion that the question be now put is debatable. You are, of course, caught with the other proposition, that this debate is not supposed to last in total more than 100 minutes. But certainly, as long as the time has not run out, any member, including the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville if he wants, can get up and speak to the proposition that the question be now put. I know it sounds silly to people who are used to that question being put immediately in other forums, but certainly it is debatable here.

There is another point I want to make. Perhaps again I am confirming something that has been said by the Chair. It has to do with the right of the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville (Mr. Cossitt) to have a vote on his proposition. Absolutely he has that right. The Standing Order was drafted that way. I may say that I happened to write it when I was chairman of the sub-committee dealing with these matters. There is no question about his right to have it. It is a question of when. He would like to have it today. I do not blame him. However, if he does not get it today, because of the passage of time, he will get it on another occasion.

One other point, the request is being made that the time taken by the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville when, as it turned out later, he had no right to have the floor, should not be counted. This reminds me of times when Madam Speaker extends the question period because time was taken for applause, points of order and what have you. It reminds me of occasions when a member is speaking in a debate and his time is up, and Mr. Speaker extends it because there was time taken which should not have been taken.