

Tabling of Documents

the majority in the House can skip each of the daily items of routine procedure that we are expected to follow in the House.

● (1120)

I understand the Governments' desire to move to Bill C-22. I understand its desire to impose a motion limiting the debate on Bill C-22. However, more important than the desire of the Government is the ability of this House to go through the various items.

There are procedures which have been used by the Government as recently as last Wednesday in an attempt to get to Government Notices of Motions. There were motions which basically stated that we should move to the next item of business. That is the procedure and the only procedure the Government can use in order to move items along a little faster. That allows the House the opportunity to look at each of the items in order to determine whether it wants to deal with those items, and allows members who have reports to make on behalf of standing committees, petitions to present and who wish to introduce Bills, the opportunity to do what the Standing Orders allows them to do under Routine Proceedings.

There is one exception. It is clearly stated that we can move to Orders of the Day. That is the only exception the rules make. The rules do not say we can move to Government Notices of Motions at any time. They do not say we automatically have the right at any time to move to Petitions. It is only in respect of that one clear case that the rules speak, and they speak only because they recognize the necessity on occasion to deal with Government business and the actual debate. There is no precedence whatsoever given to Government Notices of Motion. If it was deemed by those who made the rules, and those who are responsible for Beauchesne's, to have Government Notices of Motions treated in the same manner as Orders of the Day, then the rules would clearly state that. However, they do not. Because they are silent on that point, I would presume that we should be following the ordinary rules of procedure, and going from one item to the next as they are listed, and if the Government wishes to proceed more quickly it can move the motion, as I indicated earlier, to move to the next item of business.

The Government does have options from time to time but has not always used them. If I can go back to my earlier point, I will quote Standing Order 27:

A motion for reading the Orders of the Day shall have preference to any motion before the House.

That is understood to mean that in that particular case the Government can, at the time the Parliamentary Secretary, did or perhaps under Petitions or Introduction of Bills, skip a number of items under routine proceedings. Standing Order 27 is very clear on that.

However, it does not give the Government that same right, nor the Opposition, with respect to any other item of business. I think it is important that in ruling on this matter, the Chair look at the fact that Standing Order 27 does not give that right

in regard to Government Notices of Motions or any other routine proceeding.

I would argue that the Chair should in its ruling indicate that this motion is completely out of order. Certainly the Government wants to get on with what it considers its priorities but there is nothing indicated in the rules of the House of Commons that that would support acceptance of this motion by the Chair.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the debate on this particular question I felt very moved to become involved, because I recognize that there is a very important principle involved. Let us just look at the background.

The Government has served notice that it wants to limit debate on Bill C-22. It can introduce that motion when it comes to Government Notices of Motions under Routine Proceedings. The principle here is that we have a majority Government with over 200 members. We have an opposition consisting of about 70 members. We have a Juggernaut of a Government with a puny Opposition. What the Government wants to do is use its might to crush what is illegal and what is recognized opposition in this House. It is not prepared to be patient.

The particular rubric the Chair asked us to deal with was whether in fact a Government Member could stand up under Tabling of Documents and, having tabled a document, then move a motion to skip several items of Routine Proceedings to go to what the Government wants, what it is lusting after. It cannot work that way. In a parliamentary process the House of Commons should be the first to practice democracy. Might is not always right.

Mr. Lewis: Let's vote.

Mr. Rodriguez: I want to tell the Parliamentary Secretary that might is not always right. I have petitions to enter. I recently read a press statement from the Parliamentary Secretary which criticized Members of the Opposition, and particularly my caucus, for delaying the presenting of petitions when in fact this is exactly the process the Government used to deny the rights of ordinary Canadian citizens to be heard through their petitions. This was just so the Government could serve its own selfish and undemocratic principles.

We know the Government wants to get Bill C-22 out of the way. We all recognize why it wants to get that Bill out of the way. In fact, there is trouble in the camp. There is division within the Tory ranks about Bill C-22. It is starting to seep to the surface and the Government does not want this mess to be aired. So the Government wants to crush out any legitimate opposition in the House of Commons to Bill C-22. I think it is an abuse of the rules and we have to stop it in its tracks right now. We have to say to the Parliamentary Secretary that he cannot use these subterfuges. He cannot stand upon the pretext of Tabling a Document, in this case tabling responses