

Point of Order

In this case, there were two notices from two members of the opposition and apparently a third was given for today. Again, I suggest the wording of the rule clearly implies that more than one notice can be given and there may be a duty on the Speaker to make a selection. However, in this case, there was no such requirement because of the withdrawal.

Finally, on the question of whether the notice was properly given, I submit it was perfectly proper in this case because under the special order adopted by this House last April, subsequently amended in June, subsequently amended in September, to the best of my recollection and I do not have all the dates of the amendments, the Parliamentary Secretary knows that there were two allotted days to be held before the end of October, and as of Thursday, that had to be on either Friday, Monday or Tuesday. It was obvious that there was going to be an allotted day on one of those three days. I submit, in the circumstances, it was more than proper, indeed, it was being generous and fair, that the opposition chose to give its notice on Wednesday night of the fact that it wanted a debate and a vote on agriculture on Friday.

To put this in perspective, I want to read from the words of the Chief Government Whip on Thursday, October 26, as recorded at page 5210 of *Hansard*. At roughly eight o'clock, or nine o'clock in the evening, he was asked what the business of the House would be for Friday. This is his reply:

Mr. Speaker, the government House leader anticipated being here for a 1 a.m. vote and bringing the information on the business of the House with him on that occasion.

The surprise ending of the debate and the quickness of the vote make it clear that he is not here with us and that that information is with him. We will share it with all members of the House as quickly as possible upon his arrival. The House will start at ten o'clock.

The obvious thing is that no one on the government side at nine o'clock on Thursday night had any idea of what the business was going to be the next day except the government House leader himself who had fled the coop. He was going to come back at one o'clock on the morning of the day and tell us what the business was going to be that day.

It is typical of the way this government mismanages the time of this House. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary, I admit, was absent last week and missed this fiasco of mismanagement on the part of his colleagues. Indeed, I suggest that if he had been here, perhaps it would not

have been bungled quite so badly. The fact remains, it was badly botched.

The government could not make up its mind from one day to the next what the business was going to be. When it did not get a designation in for Friday, it had to then make Monday and Tuesday the allotted days and so we changed the notice and withdrew the old notices that had been given, as we are entitled to do.

My final point is this. Your Honour can ignore the mismanagement to Your Honour's content. I will not argue that because that is more a political point than a procedural one. But I say that the government, in raising this point of order, has no right to raise hypothetical questions and put them to Your Honour.

• (1530)

Your Honour must make decisions based on events that have transpired. The parliamentary secretary, at the opening of his remarks, indicated he had no objection to the procedural propriety of the motion that we are debating today and, accordingly, I suggest that his entire point of order be ruled out of order by Your Honour at once because the questions that he has posed are truly hypothetical and ought not be dealt with in a ruling from the Chair given in the normal way.

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, I sat here and listened at great length to the point of order raised by my hon. colleague, and I just want to say that if a person is to properly represent the matter in a serious vein, which I have no doubt he intends to do, then perhaps he should get his facts straight.

Because I was here I can speak with some degree of qualification. In the first instance he made some reference to the government Whip indicating that at 9 p.m. that evening he was unprepared to give the Orders of the Day because they had expected that the vote would be taken at 1 a.m. I say to you, Sir, I was in the House when I heard, I believe it was the Whip of the Liberal party say, with waved finger: "You will be here until one o'clock this morning voting on the matter." That is the first point.

The second point is the government Whip did not make that statement at 9 p.m. He made it at precisely 7.50 p.m. because immediately following that time I went and attempted to eat at the parliamentary dining room and they told me the restaurant was closed, and that was at about two minutes to 8 p.m.