Government Orders

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Indeed, my colleague from Etobicoke North went to the first of our ongoing conversations on the North American free trade agreement—

Some hon. members: A point of order.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): —and we on this side of the House have tried to activate the committee again to accommodate the suggestions of the New Democratic Party to hear more witnesses, but the New Democratic Party, as we can see again today has preferred to play pure politics with this.

Some hon. members: Order, order.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Desperation politics I might say, because its members have seen where their standing is going in the polls. They are slipping out of sight. There is a very good reason why they are slipping out of sight and their fear is written all over their faces today.

We have been trying for days to reintroduce this legislation. New Democratic Party members have blocked us continually, as they are trying to do today. We must follow through with the proper parliamentary procedure of having second reading, moving the legislation into committee stage and then moving ahead with the implementing legislation.

Some hon. members: Point of order.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Canada's economic prospects are brighter today than they have been for quite some time now. Economic indicators are confirming remarkable strength.

Eight and a half years ago when our government took office we recognized that the world was changing. We recognized that the transformation to a more integrated, global economy was accelerating and that Canada needed to respond. We developed and implemented a comprehensive—

● (1100)

Mr. Blaikie: Let them vote, like you should have, Madam Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The lack of respect that is being shown for this place today—

Mr. Barrett: Do not lecture us. Just stick to the rules.

An hon. member: Look who is talking about obeying the rules.

Mr. Barrett: I'll take my punishment under the rules but I do not want the rules changed by the Chair.

An hon. member: You'll take your punishment in the polls also.

An hon. member: Well, we won't have you to sell out our country for a mess of pottage either.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will listen to the hon. member one more time, hoping that this time he will show some respect for the House, for the Chair and for the decision that has been made. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Rodriguez: A Tory should not lecture us about respect for the Chair.

Mr. Barrett: Madam Speaker, when I stand on my feet on a point of order it is out of respect for the rules of this House and the Chair. So I find it difficult to hear the Chair say: "I hope that you respect the Chair". I respect the Chair and the rules and I will live by those rules.

Two hon. members have given their word that they said no to your question, which you did not hear. The reasonable thing to do is to accept their word and put the vote. To deny that the members said no is, in effect, to call them liars and that is not acceptable from the Chair of this House.

That is my simple point. They have given their word. They said no. An hon. member's word must be accepted in this Chamber. You may not have heard the word, you may not have heard no, but they have said they said no and an hon. member's word must be heard in this Chamber. That is standard, traditional practice, Madam Speaker. That is not an insult to the Chair.

Mr. Nystrom: Madam Speaker, up until this point I have not intervened in the debate. May I make a suggestion I have seen happen many times in my number of years in this House. A number of Speakers, where there was some uncertainty, where there was some doubt or some dispute on both sides of the House, the Speaker would often put the question again to clarify the air.

It is with respect, Madam Speaker, that I suggest that to you. There is obviously some doubt. There are some members who are not pleased with the interpretation made. We could create a lot more peace in the House if you once again were to put the question, ask if there are yeas and nays, and then proceed in that way.