

Business of the House

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I can tell the Hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition that there is legislation, particularly in the area of social justice and law and order, Solicitor General Bills, and Bills on mandatory supervision. People are asking why those particular pieces of legislation, which will offer some form of protection for the average citizen, have not been passed by the House of Commons.

Mr. Gauthier: You haven't called them.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: All those pieces of legislation, plus the number of other attractive matters that will be brought forward, will give us a rich legislative agenda. I hope Members of Parliament will pass all items before Christmas.

Mr. Benjamin: And a Merry Christmas to you too!

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize to the House for asking a question that brought forth such an empty and meaningless response.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: I do not know whether it was meaningless or not, Mr. Speaker. I thought the question was a little empty myself.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): In bringing forward all this wonderful legislation, would the Government House Leader find some time for a debate on the proposed reforms of the House, bearing in mind that that ought to take place before the Christmas recess to give Members an opportunity to express their views on the new package?

Second, in scheduling House business, would the House Leader also remember to arrange some time for a debate with regard to the two reforms that he tabled earlier this week so that those matters can be dealt with by Members of the House since they affect each and every Member?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very valid question with respect to the reform of the House. This is a major step forward and one which will be dealt with a good deal of support, I am sure, throughout the House. It is a positive response to an all-Party committee, which indicates that we should make very good progress.

As the Hon. Member will appreciate, I have been carrying on discussions with the House Leaders opposite with the idea of having their suggestions and input. I hope to have a very attractive package ready for December, which we will bring to the House for debate.

I will bring forward one item with respect to the registry of foreign travel at an appropriate time after I have first discussed the matter with opposition House Leaders.

With respect to the reference to the standing committee for study of other items which might be included in a registry, I want to discuss that matter. It would seem to me in the best interests of the committee and the whole process that if we got

that into committee quickly, it would allow members on the Management and Members' Services Committee to give it a thorough examination so they could bring down their report by the end of the year. When we can see that report, there will be an opportunity to discuss the final response of the Government with respect to those recommendations.

● (1510)

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on that same question. Most of us in the House remember that the last time we talked about reform in the Chamber was last June 28, at about one o'clock in the morning. I ask the President of the Privy Council—and I think most of us would appreciate it—to come in a little earlier with the reform package this time than was the case the last time, so that we can substantially address it in a manner that we all understand.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member pointed out, the discussion we had with regard to the first report of the committee took place at the end of June. That did not occur without very substantial prior discussions with the House Leaders of the opposition Parties. I would have liked to address all Hon. Members of the Opposition personally and to give them the benefit of my sage advice on these matters, but that was not possible, and I had to deal through their House Leaders.

In any event, the Hon. Member can rest assured that we are discussing the matter now. I am sure his House Leader is advising his caucus. In December I will be coming forward with this very important initiative. There will be an opportunity for Hon. Members to participate in the debate. I would be very interested in hearing their positions.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, does the Hon. Government House Leader not think it important that Hon. Members have a chance to debate this matter and put their views on the record before the package about which he is talking—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I was reluctant to accept even the earlier question. I think the representations are becoming ones which should be put through the House Leaders for conversation at House Leaders' meetings. The practice here has been to allow House business questions about matters of agenda and scheduling for the next week. This is moving quite a long way away from that, I would suggest, even though Hon. Members know that I, too, believe the subject is important.