

Business of the House

this country we can speak our minds with freedom. It is a privilege well worth maintaining.

During the course of my life I have had a profound respect for the institution of parliament. That is why, although new to this chamber, I have taken some part in the deliberations on this particular point. In any instance where there appears to me to be a limitation of the rights of private members, I hope I will be able to say something about it. The institution of parliament is too important to our country and to the British commonwealth to be lightly regarded.

On this particular occasion it has appeared to us—certainly it has to me—that some of the rights and privileges of private members have been in danger of being curtailed. I would much prefer that the well established rules of procedure of the House of Commons be followed without any such serious alterations as that suggested by the motion before us. This is an institution which at times has come in for considerable criticism by people outside. Alternative methods of government have been proposed elsewhere in the world. They have attracted the attention of some people, but I for one am thankful that I can hold fast to the parliamentary institution we have devised, with the rights of private members, and maintain unimpaired the privileges of members of parliament. If it were not for the fact that the privileges of members of parliament are in danger now of being curtailed I would not be participating in this debate. If this is to become a precedent for the future I think the time to oppose it is right now.

We had a first class suggestion that any similar attempt to alter the rules of the house should require adequate notice. If we had been given adequate notice of this particular proposal perhaps some compromise could have been worked out, or saner counsel might have prevailed. When from time to time the rules of the house are under consideration for alteration or change that is one thing that certainly should be taken into account. In view of the fact that the amendment which was proposed earlier was not acceptable to the house, and in view of the lateness of the hour, I propose the following amendment. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Middlesex East (Mr. White):

That the motion be amended by striking out all the words after "That" and substituting the following:

"for this day's sitting the house shall after the dinner recess sit from 8 p.m. to 10.30 p.m."

Mr. McIlraith: How ridiculous can you get?

Mr. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Winnipeg South

Centre (Mr. Churchill) who has just spoken, I am very thankful at this hour of the day and under these circumstances for the protection of the rules of the house.

Mr. McIlraith: Protection of the rules?

Mr. Pearson: Abuse of the rules.

Mr. Dinsdale: I am thankful to have the privilege of living in a democracy, because judging from the comments coming from members on the opposite side of the house just at about this stage of the proceedings we on this side would be eaten alive if it were not for the protection which is provided.

Mr. Mutch: Pretty indigestible.

Mr. Pearson: Tough.

Mr. Dinsdale: I admit it would be a bad case of indigestion.

Mr. Mutch: The word is "licence".

Mr. Dinsdale: Obviously the grand strategy of leaving several important pieces of legislation until the final week of the session, which has led up to the situation we face, was devised with the intention of avoiding the necessity of detailed debate. I imagine it was anticipated that members of the opposition would fold their tents like the Arabs and silently steal away. It must be a considerable disappointment to government members who hoped to deal with this legislation without having it given the attention it deserves. It seems to me that we might just as well have government by order in council if we are not going to be allowed full opportunity—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not like to interrupt the hon. member, but now that we have an amendment his remarks must relate to it and not to the main motion. There is an amendment before the house, and for the hon. member to be in order he must relate his remarks only to the amendment.

Mr. Sinnott: He wouldn't know. He is too young.

Mr. Dinsdale: I apologize if I have wandered from the amendment, but I was under the impression that in order to discuss the amendment it was necessary to deal with the major motion before us.

An hon. Member: You will know better now.

Mr. Dinsdale: We shall proceed to the discussion of the amendment that has just been introduced by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill). He has proposed that we extend the sitting for the present day to the hour of 10.30 p.m. In view of the nature of today's discussion and the attempt to rush proceedings in order to meet the Christmas