

*Private Members' Business*

take the bill that is at the top of the list. It can just request that it be stood.

The other day the parliamentary secretary said the government was not ready to proceed with the particular bill that was called. What is the reason for putting a bill on the order paper? It is to discuss it. The government decided it would be better not to discuss that bill at that time. I do not think that was the intention of the changes that were made to private members' hour.

I suggest when we left in that motions would only be allowed to stand twice, that was for the purpose of not allowing the government or anyone else to stand motions. If they were there, they were to be taken without delay. If not, they would be taken off the order paper.

There can be a number of abuses if the government decides it is going to organize private members' hour. We have been lax for some time in not demanding that all orders be called. It is sometimes agreed that we will not take the motions on the order paper for this week or the Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers or Public Bills, but go on to something else. If someone interjects, we must go through the whole list calling every item. We go to each succeeding one as the Standing Orders provide, and call them all individually. That has not been done all the time simply because it would be foolish. Unless you have an interest in something that is somewhere in the middle, you would not request that. I have done it a number of times, but for a different purpose. It was not for the purpose of having them all called. However, it does protect those who have an interest somewhere in the list.

If the government is going to have the power to stand them, a government member will be able to exert considerable pressure.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Will hon. members agree that I do not see the clock?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Peters:** It is not impossible for the government to put pressure on members on the other side of the House. It can do that fairly easily by saying it needs some time to look at an item or to check all the ramifications of it. It may say it will agree to send either the bill or its subject matter to committee or, in the alternative, make it a government bill.

There are many ways in which the government can influence private members' hour. It can restrict the right of the individual to make his point. Often a member puts down an item only to get a subject discussed, not necessarily to have a bill passed.

I strongly urge that Your Honour give very serious consideration to this question of allowing matters to stand at the request of the government. If a matter is to stand, it should be at the request of the member who placed it on the order paper, not at the request of the government. It will not then be quite as neat and orderly. The government will not be able to tell a member beforehand that it is all arranged. It will keep the spirit of the private members' hour, which is to allow backbenchers to put forth ideas.

[Mr. Peters.]

● (2232)

**Mr. Pinard:** Would the hon. member permit a question? He said a few moments ago that a parliamentary secretary had told him the government was not ready for a private members' bill. It was not I. I should like the hon. member to be more precise and tell us what bill was involved when that happened, and what parliamentary secretary said such a thing.

**Mr. Peters:** It has happened many times. I am sure it happens often in the course of the negotiations which take place. I understood the hon. gentleman to say the other day, when discussing the orders of the day, that there were a number of members on his side who were interested in speaking on a certain matter but who were not ready. That is fairly honest. There is nothing wrong about it. But I think the person who should make such a decision is the person in whose name the bill stands.

**Mr. Pinard:** I just want to say for the record that I have never talked with the hon. member about private members' business except this afternoon when I asked that the hour be postponed until tonight.

[Translation]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, with your permission, are we going to continue or do we adjourn the debate?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I think it was quite difficult to put aside the hour tonight and that all hon. members know that I have asked leave of the House not to see the clock for a while.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. Many times I have wondered about the way we dispose of certain motions. Of course, we always agree, we always succeed in agreeing. That was not always all right with the hon. member who was frustrated in his hopes to comment on a motion. However, Mr. Speaker, I think that Standing Orders 19 and 49 are there to protect hon. members' rights, especially those who sit to your left because on the other side they have a majority and they can arrive at decisions whatever we are prepared to accept, because the majority always win in the end. I think it will be a good thing to keep those standing orders however difficult they are to interpret. Every hon. member reads them as he sees them, everybody thinks in his way. But Standing Order 19 has been read many times tonight and I think it should be considered very carefully. It reads as follows:

... notices of motions, not taken up when called may (upon the request of the government) be allowed to stand and retain their precedence; ...

The government decides. Does the government leave the decision entirely up to the parliamentary secretary, or does it decide after consultation with the hon. member concerned? If it is after consultation, then that automatically becomes something quite normal because for reasons that were mentioned tonight and do not need repeating sometimes a member, as has happened in my own case in the past, will not be present at the time a motion is called.