

*Business of the House*

**Mr. Andre:** The hon. member for Shefford's respect for democracy is plainly obvious and his concern for the country, of course, we know.

I expect that in future votes on this issue we will make a distinction between the votes of the Bloc Quebecois and the votes of the opposition parties.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that a very high priority of the government, because of the timing, is Bill C-80 dealing with the Children's Special Allowance Act. It needs to be passed in order for it to come into effect.

In terms of the question of the Westray documents, as my colleague the Minister of State for Small Businesses has indicated, all the materials are being collected. I can assure the hon. member that all those materials will be presented just as soon as they have been collated.

He will understand that whenever documents involve other parties, we need to get their agreement to table them. There is no difficulty getting the agreement but it is a process that takes some time. It is being worked on expeditiously and I expect we will be able to present those documents to the House and have them available for other parties very soon.

The legal opinions are by way of letter to the deputy minister of justice who asked for these for support. The deputy minister of justice will be available for participation before the committee and will have these with him. In the meantime, I am certainly prepared to have members who are interested come to my office and read the document there, that is no problem. I hope they understand that the nature of the correspondence is such that I cannot distribute it broadly.

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops):** Mr. Speaker, I would like two clarifications, one from my hon. friend the government House leader. As a result of the motion passed earlier today, Bill C-81 will pass second reading later today and will then be referred to a committee.

I wonder if my hon. friend would indicate whether the government would be open to the consideration of televising that committee since the House of Commons will not be sitting next week.

I would also like to confirm a point that the government House leader made a week or two ago that during

the committee period of this bill because it is so important to the future of Canada, there would be a willingness on the part of the government to consider amendments that normally may be considered beyond the scope of the legislation.

**Mr. Andre:** Mr. Speaker, I am hoping there is recognition of the necessity for dispatch and the necessity to have a clear indication for the Chief Electoral Officer of the intent, if not the final completion, of the bill and that necessitates acting very quickly. I anticipate that the committee will be meeting this afternoon, perhaps tomorrow morning, and speaking as one potential witness, perhaps Saturday and Sunday. Frankly I believe there is no benefit to the ultimate goal of Canadian unity to try and schedule ourselves around the interests of a viewing audience.

That being said, I will wait to hear what the committee recommends in respect of how they might proceed.

• (1510)

In terms of amendments, as I have indicated privately in meetings we have had, yes, we are prepared to look at amendments that are appropriate and improve the bill but I am hesitant to say amendments that go beyond the scope of the bill. The hon. member can understand my concern.

This is, very simply, enabling legislation, it is not-binding, it is not compulsory. It is nothing but enabling legislation for a plebiscite. Hence I cannot immediately respond positively to the suggestion we use it to amend some other acts that really do not have anything to do with what we are trying to accomplish in this bill. With that qualifier I will certainly listen to any suggestions.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, is the government House leader indicating it would be up to the committee to decide whether or not it would be appropriate to televise the proceedings? After all, I think we all agree the people of Canada would like to view the deliberations around this important issue.

**Mr. Andre:** I will say this. I wish a camera were trained on some of the deliberations around this issue and the people of Canada might not have the same favourable impression that sometimes we think they have. As I indicated, that is up to the committee to decide.