

Business of the House

finish this bill on Monday, and, if that is the case, what order of business we shall be following thereafter.

● (1602)

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, we will follow the order of the bills indicated yesterday in the House by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen), but I must specify that, barring unforeseen circumstances, we will resume study of the bill first thing on Monday.

PRIVATE MEMBERS PUBLIC BILLS*[English]*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): It being four o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills, notices of motions, private bills.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will interrupt the proceedings for only a moment. There has been consultation on this matter.

A group of private members' bills were discharged and their subject matter referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. The motion referring these bills was moved by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) prior to the Christmas recess. A bill was omitted from that grouping, and it is my purpose to attempt to have that bill included. If the House will give its unanimous consent, I wish to have Bill C-239, in the name of the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway), discharged and its subject matter referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East) (for Mr. Whiteway) moved:

That Bill C-239 be withdrawn, the order discharged, and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): The House has heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Agreed and so ordered. I am advised that there is unanimous consent to stand orders Nos. 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 16. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

SENIOR CITIZENS COMMISSION ACT**STUDY AND IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS OF SENIOR CITIZENS**

Mr. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury) moved that Bill C-218, respecting senior citizens, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, senior citizens of Canada, working in far more difficult times than we have experienced, have created for us a better way of life than they themselves enjoyed. For many senior citizens living in their golden years the sands of time are running swiftly. The opportunity for us to recognize their contribution to our society is limited in time, and every day we wait this opportunity decreases dramatically. That is why I have introduced this bill.

I suggest that there is a need for a commission as a full-time job to identify the needs of senior citizens. These needs are very visible and large in number. I would like to mention a few of them.

The first problem that comes to mind is that of poverty. Many senior citizens grew up in the hungry thirties when pension plans were few and old age security was difficult to buy. Pension plans that were available did not envisage today's high prices and dramatic increases in the cost of living. Large numbers of our senior citizens are living below the poverty line, and the sole source of income for many of them is the old age pension and supplement. Their meagre incomes are ravaged by inflation. The cost of living, particularly food, clothing, shelter, energy and heat costs, have risen very rapidly, causing economic hardship and mental anguish. These costs increase faster than the increase in the old age pension and supplement. For workers who are being retired earlier than age 65 the present old age pension system offers no assistance, and these early retired workers suffer an unfair hardship.

How do we define poverty? There are four poverty lines defined by three independent organizations. They each provide unofficial measures which are useful in assessing poverty by income level. The Economic Council of Canada in its fifth report used the Statistics Canada approach to measuring poverty: a family is poor if it spends 70 per cent or more of its income on food, clothing and shelter. The Special Senate Committee on Poverty judged that this criterion was not satisfactory as a permanent yardstick of poverty.

In 1973 Statistics Canada revised its poverty line. It decided that family is poor if it spends 62 per cent or more of its income on basic essentials.

The Senate committee formula and that used by the Canadian Council on Social Development put poverty levels at 50 per cent of average Canadian family income with varying adjustments for inflation, taxes and gross national product.

There is no official poverty line; at best, any measure will be faulty. Last March Senator David Croll, Chairman of the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, put on record the 1976 poverty line using the four bases.