

Oral Questions

that time to try to make his point, that would have been much more useful than wasting three hours of the time of the House.

Mr. Nielsen: You rang the bell.

Mr. Pinard: As to the second part of the Hon. Member's question in reference to a letter that, I gather, was sent to me by his colleague, the House Leader of the NDP, I have not received that letter yet. Even if I had received it I would have invited my hon. colleague to join me in a House Leaders' meeting that I am willing to have at any time to discuss all the business of the House, including the Crow. Of course, to try to score political points it is useful to be able to refer to a letter which has been sent to me but which I have not received.

I speak in good faith, Madam Speaker. I am willing to negotiate anything on any Bill. His colleague knows that all he has to do is call me and I will have a meeting anytime.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I say to the House Leader that we are serious. My understanding was that the letter had been delivered to his office by hand this morning.

If I understand the rules correctly, one can ask procedural questions but not substantive questions about Bills that are before the House. Let us forget those matters; we are concerned about the substance of this matter.

I should like to clarify what the Minister has just said. Is the Minister telling the House that the Government is now prepared to do what ought to have been done sometime ago, which is to break the Bill into its three key elements and bring two of them before the House so that they can be disposed of quickly?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Member contradicted himself in the preamble to his question. I would rather not go into this any further, because I would be insulting the intelligence of most of the members of this House by elaborating on the issue. I may therefore remind the Hon. Member that discussions on how the business of the House should be conducted usually take place at meetings at the parliamentary House leader level. I offered to suggest that his colleague, who is well aware of this procedure, advise me that a meeting would be desirable. I am willing to discuss the form and duration of the debate. I am also willing to negotiate any agreement that will help the House dispose quickly of the Bill in question. However, I think the Hon. Member should understand that a good way to get one's views across is to refrain from using purely dilatory tactics like the one used this morning by the New Democratic Party when it moved an adjournment motion on the spur of the moment, at eleven o'clock this morning, thus preventing Parliament from considering this important matter. I think there are more useful ways of speeding up the debate

than preventing the House from sitting and trying to make political points during oral question period by making proposals usually made during private meetings among the parliamentary House leaders.

[*English*]

REQUEST FOR HOUSE LEADERS' MEETING

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, that would all have sounded a model of sweet reason but, as the House Leader knows, the reality is that there was no House Leaders' meeting today, nor is one scheduled for tomorrow. We are quite serious in making the proposal now. This part of the Bill that is totally unacceptable—and that is the change in the Crow rate—to Canadians almost from coast to coast—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Hon. Member is giving the Chair some difficulty. First of all, just now he is debating, and I wish he would keep to questions concerning the procedure of the Bill and be very careful not to surpass that.

Mr. Broadbent: I will be very reasonable with the House Leader, Madam Speaker. Since the House is supposed to debate this measure for the rest of today and tomorrow, and since it is evident that this Party does not intend to allow that Bill to pass—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: —and the Conservative Opposition has taken the same view, will the Government House Leader meet with the House Leaders of the two Opposition Parties this afternoon to discuss breaking up the Bill so that we can proceed in an orderly fashion in the House of Commons?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, I can only repeat what I just said, namely that I am always prepared to meet with my colleagues. I indicated yesterday to the Hon. Member's parliamentary House leader that although I was unable to hold a meeting this morning, I was willing, if he wanted a meeting, to have one later on, even this afternoon. Meanwhile, I think we ought to proceed with the debate, and since the Hon. Member says he wants to be reasonable, in that case perhaps the House could be allowed to sit so that the debate can take place. I realize he may be opposed to the bill, but I feel that if he has any respect for democracy, he will allow the debate to take place and let his party express its views and dissent, and support amendments it has proposed, and at the appropriate time, allow the House to speak out in favour or against the amendments at the report stage and third reading. That is what the parliamentary system is all about. In that case, the House can proceed intelligently, and the Opposition, while making its dissenting views known, can, at a given point, allow Parliament to speak out in favour or against a question. Nevertheless, this procedure does not preclude having meetings at the parliamentary House leader level to negotiate what can be done during the