

Government Orders

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of brief remarks on the subject of Bill C-35, the Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act.

There are two aspects of what has happened with this bill that I would like to bring to the House's attention. The first one has already been referred to by my colleague, our opposition House leader. That is the apparent propensity of individuals in the government administration to push the Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act concept to its limit. In other words, from time to time we find individual departments, with the acquiescence or assistance of the Ministry of Justice, trying to slip on by—and I do not think that is really a fair word. It is not really slipping it on by but getting as much amendment punch into this statute as you can possibly squeeze in. We want to keep in mind that the purpose of this statute is to enable technical minor amendments to be made to statutes when it should be apparent to all that these kinds of amendments should be made.

One example is the minor discrepancies between English and French translations in the various statutes. Every year there are a number of those that come to the attention of Parliament, either through court litigation or from citizens.

It is incumbent upon the House and the committee structure that reviews the statute, and the justice department functionaries that oversee the production of the statute every year, to ensure that the spirit of the statute, miscellaneous amendments of a technical and minor nature, is maintained and that public servants are not tempted to abuse the non-partisan aspect of that act.

The second concerns the fact that earlier this year the government modified the Standing Orders to reduce the size of committees.

I know from my work on the justice committee that all of the work that committee has been doing, including review of this Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 1991, affects the ability of that committee to do this type of work properly. It has been doing this kind of work for many years although this goes back to 1975 when the mechanism was put in place. There are only seven or eight members on that committee now. It is a little short of manpower to do its standing committee work. This is the statute work that is referred to it from the House and some of the legislative work that occasionally comes to it.

I make this point so that in the event the size of committees comes up for discussion in future as a debating point—and in particular with reference to the justice committee—the change in the Standing Orders has probably impaired that committee's ability to deal well with this particular Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 1991.

Having said that, I think it is a very useful statute and one that is usually dealt with on a non-partisan basis. It provides a good, quick and effective service to the taxpayers in terms of making quick changes to our legislation.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have just been having conversations with the House leader for the Liberal Party and it is my understanding that there was an understanding earlier today that we would not complete this debate because of the necessity to wait for the Speaker's ruling.

I guess in that circumstance, Madam Speaker, may I call it 4 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It being 4 p.m. this House stands adjourned until 11 a.m. Monday, November 25, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 3.15 p.m.