

*Standing Orders*

Therefore, included in this motion, is a provision to provide six allotted days in the fall, the supply period ending December 10; nine days during the winter months, the supply period ending March 26; and 10 days rather than 13 days in the spring supply period which ends June 23, for a total of the 25 allotted days as currently exists.

With respect to comprehensive responses to committee reports, I want to thank the Opposition for agreeing to the extension of 30 days for the time allowed for a comprehensive reply by the Government to a committee report. Currently, the time allowed for a comprehensive reply is 120 days. The Government requested 180 days and we negotiated a compromise of 150 days. I want to thank the Opposition House Leaders for their support and co-operation in that regard.

The motion also sets out the mechanism to give effect to the substantive, consequential changes to our current rules. As one can appreciate, this requires a lot of work and I want to thank, on behalf of all of us, the Clerk's Office, the people at the table and our own respective staff for their precise assistance in putting together the details of the motion.

These minor changes to the parliamentary reforms have been arrived at after some 15 months of experience and considerable consultation with all Members, particularly Members opposite. Members in various quarters of the House will know that we have extended, by special order, the expiry of these rules from December, 1986 to April 15, 1987, then again to May 29, and finally to June 5.

My hon. friend, the House Leader of the New Democratic Party, will know especially that the increasingly smaller extensions were made at his request and supported by my friend, the Liberal House Leader and myself, to in effect force us into doing the work and making the decisions to enable us to "fish or cut bait", as the expression goes. We believe that the time is appropriate to move, and I think there is a genuine desire to see that these provisional rules become formalized, fine-tuned, and modified to take into account the experience that we have gained over the last 15 months.

It must be pointed out that throughout there has been an extended and thorough consultative process. After the December extension last year, the House Leaders agreed that at the end of January our staffs would meet to review the rules, operations, and any changes that might be considered or proposed from various quarters. We also wanted to survey our caucus concerns and wait for the review and the report of the procedural committee which came down on April 7. By mid-March, we agreed to have an exchange of documents or positions, and they were examined and dealt with by April 1. On April 2, our staff met and proposals from our side were identified.

We then extended the reform rules expiry date from April 15 to May 29. By early May, I undertook to have all the Government's proposals shared for discussion among the three Parties' leadership and caucuses. The Opposition received the

full written proposals on May 15 and the House Leaders' staffs were to meet to exchange and develop positions.

By the end of May, House Leaders were scheduling more frequent meetings to explore possibilities or concerns growing out of the Government's proposals. The time expired and we made a one-week extension from May 29 to June 5 to allow all caucuses to be fully apprised.

Last week we had meetings almost daily, and sometimes twice a day, in which there was a good deal of negotiation. I say to my colleagues that I believe everyone acted in good faith and that in those areas of disagreement, naturally the concerns are genuinely felt.

There were several areas in which agreement could not be reached in the original package that was presented to the opposition Parties for their consideration. However, many of those proposals were dropped. On the other hand, there were areas where we believe changes are necessary, notwithstanding the absence of agreement.

The motion before the House today provides for moving time allocation on Bills during Government Orders rather than under the routine proceeding called Motions. There was not full agreement worked out among the Parties of the House on this change, but we believe it is necessary in order to encourage the orderly disposition of the business of the House.

The proposal in today's motion to move the presentation of petitions down the sequence list daily, and to split Introduction of Bills into two separate routine proceedings—the first for Government Bills and the second for Private Members' Bills—and to provide that the first category will all be called each sitting day, is the best way we envisage overcoming the possibility of another procedural impasse of the sort we worked our way through last November on Bill C-22.

The Chair's rulings at that time, while a guide to the House, are not able to prevent a recurrence, given the way the routine proceedings work and the limited time we have for them each day.

As the Speaker and his predecessors have said, the rights of the Opposition to be able to delay by use of procedure, but chiefly by length of debate rather than repeated dilatory tactics, have to be balanced by the fundamental right of a government to be able to propose its business to the House.

• (1230)

If a government, despite its numbers in the House, is not able to introduce a Bill, subject to due notice period and subject to two possible recorded votes, before the clock runs out every day for Routine Proceedings, I submit that all Members will have abdicated their side of the balanced responsibility which is at the heart of the parliamentary system.

I quote the Speaker's own words in the ruling of April 14 on an impasse on the same difficult Bill: