

House of Commons

layman critics. Obviously it was also a matter of considerable debate in the country during the recent general election.

I would like to read into the record so there is no confusion just exactly what did happen on the subject of free trade. In the last Parliament there were eight opposition days, thirty-five hours. The Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade—

Mr. Gauthier: What has that got to do with the acceptability of this motion? Tell me.

Mr. Lewis: One might notice that I did not interrupt Mr. Gray when he was speaking, nor Mr. Riis when he was speaking.

Mr. Gauthier: You promised you would stick to the motion. Stick to the issue.

Mr. Lewis: The Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade had 24 days of consideration, totalling 120 hours. There were government motions, four days of consideration for that, some 18.5 hours. Second reading of Bill C-130 took five days, some 30 hours. The legislative committee sat for 16 days, some 87 hours. Report stage of Bill C-130 took five days, and that took 30 hours. Third reading of Bill C-130 took two days, some 15.5 hours.

Mr. Cooper: What is the total?

Mr. Lewis: I am pleased the Hon. Member asked about the total. It is a total of 64 days of committee and House of Commons time, some 336 hours.

The Bill that has been introduced and printed today is virtually identical in content to the old Bill C-130.

• (1740)

The procedural precedent for this House order is the Chair's ruling of June 13, 1988. The Government of the day sought to suspend the parliamentary calendar in order to complete certain government business.

The major points in the ruling, which were all answered in the affirmative, were as follows: First, was it proper for the Government to give notice under Government Notices of Motions? The answer is yes. Can the Government initiate a motion to suspend the provisions of the Standing Orders? The answer is yes. Does such a motion, if in order, require unanimous consent or simply a majority decision of the House? The answer is yes. If the motion is in order according to precedents, has the recent parliamentary reform

changed our practice fundamentally and rendered prior precedents inapplicable? The answer is yes.

I submit that the motion on the Order Paper is on all fours with Your Honour's ruling of June 13, 1988. I urge that the Chair rule the motion to be in order.

In closing, I would give notice that at the next sitting of the House, immediately before the Order of the Day is called for resuming debate on the motion, that is Government business No. 1 on the Order Paper, and on any amendments proposed thereto, I will move that the debate shall not be further adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the Hon. Member in just a moment. Perhaps all Hon. Members will let me consult with the Clerk for a moment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, first I want to say to the House that the Minister has attempted a procedure which was to put before the House something which cannot be done at this time. The Standing Orders of the House—and they will remain the Standing Orders of this House until they manage to destroy them—state at Standing Order 57 . . .

Some Hon. Members: Ah, ah!

Mr. Gauthier: Standing Order 57, read it, take them out of your desk, the Standing Orders are there:

Immediately before the Order of the Day for resuming an adjourned debate is called . . .

So the debate must have been adjourned. In addition, the debate must have begun, but all we are doing today is beginning the debate on procedure, on the acceptability of the motion. The debate has not been adjourned, Mr. Speaker, so the Minister cannot table in the House a notice of motion concerning Standing Order 57. That is strictly against the Standing Orders and I submit to the Chair that it must tell the Minister to go back to his books, learn the Standing Orders, and then come back to the House once he has done that.

[*English*]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina—Lumsden): Mr. Speaker, in two minutes I would like to comment on the submission by the Government House Leader about committee hearings and the number of hours spent. As I recall, no travelling was done. There was extreme limitation on those who could appear. Many could not appear because any hearings that were held were in Ottawa only. There is more to this country than just the City of Ottawa.