

Extension of Hours

Government's Orders shall be called and considered in such sequence as the Government—

And not the Opposition.

—determines.

We want to keep our freedom to establish the order of business under the Standing Orders in our democratic system because we have the majority in this place and we are the Government. We want, respectfully, to keep the initiative. I think the motion by my hon. colleague goes against the Standing Orders and the spirit of the practices of this House.

I am not saying that I am not willing to negotiate with him. I indicated that earlier. His suggestions are negotiable. In my questions to him a few moments ago I made it clear that he never saw fit to raise this with me. There is still time to raise it with me for negotiation outside this House. We might come to an agreement. But certainly this does not render his amendment acceptable in my point of view.

Even if I oppose this amendment on the grounds of law, on the grounds of the Standing Orders and the practices and procedures of this place, that does not mean I do not want to negotiate with him and the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) a reasonable time for debating specific measures. As a matter of fact, the Hon. Member and his colleague in the NDP submitted to their caucus suggestions I made in relation to different Bills on the Order Paper. I think this discussion should go on in a private meeting, not on the floor of the House, by surprise, using an amendment.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, as to the acceptability of the motion, I am sure the Chair will appreciate that this is the first time this particular Standing Order has been brought into play. The Government House Leader is trying to say that because the Standing Order does not make any references to legislation we cannot include some specificity as to which way Government legislation is dealt with. I think that argument falls on its face. Just because it does not say that does not mean we are precluded from amending the motion in a way so as specifically to say how those extended hours are to be used. It is not precluded in the actual Standing Order.

The second point bears on the spirit of what we are trying to do, which is to say to the Government: this is your legislation. We did not put in that motion any of the many things we might have wanted, such as the property rights amendment which the Government refuses to bring forward. We took the Government's legislation and said we are prepared to deal with it in this way. Instead of rejecting it out of hand on a technicality, I am surprised the Government House Leader does not want to support our motion in the spirit of parliamentary reform and in an effort to have the Government's legislation dealt with.

I suggest to the Chair that Standing Order 9 does not preclude our spelling out by way of amendment how the extended hours are to be used. In breaking this new ground I am sure the Chair will want to take that into consideration. If we are to extend hours, surely there should be an amendment allowed to state exactly what the House wants to do in those

hours. It is within the spirit of the rules of this place that we as the Official Opposition, in trying to suggest to the Government how we are prepared to use those extended hours, referred specifically to the Government House Leader's priority list in drafting the list of items we included in our amendment.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the point presently before us, I want to break it into two parts because I think it has to be dealt with as two separate matters.

The first point is whether or not it is appropriate to spell out in the motion to extend the sitting hours the purpose for which that extension is required. I would put through the Chair to the Government House Leader that he surely would not want that the Chair not be allowed to accept a motion which specifically refers to the business to be conducted during a period of extended hours. I am sure there would be times when the Government would want to move an extension for the express purpose of dealing with a particular piece of legislation and no other. So I urge that the Chair not accept the Government House Leader's suggestion that, by virtue of his specifying the business to be considered during the extension, that automatically makes the amendment out of order. If that amendment had come from the Government it would also have to be out of order, based simply on the fact that no reference is made to that in Standing Order 9.

● (1550)

I ask Your Honour to consider the implications of not permitting anyone to include, in any motion to extend the hours under Standing Order 9, any reference to particular legislation with which one wants to deal. I think that would be an error that the Government would come to regret. Perhaps the Government House Leader himself might concede that that kind of ruling would be most restrictive.

I then want to deal with the second matter as to whether it is appropriate for an Hon. Member of the Opposition to move an amendment to a motion put down by the Government to extend the sitting hours, the purpose of the amendment being to specify what should be dealt with during that period. Surely the only thing that an amendment to a motion cannot do is to alter the substance of the motion. It can add to the motion. It can in some instances subtract from the motion. However, it may not alter the substance.

I contend that the motion by the Opposition House Leader does not alter the substance. He is not suggesting for one minute that the extension of hours should not occur, although he may well want to vote against it. He is suggesting what can and should be considered during that period. It is not for the Government House Leader to determine whether that is acceptable or not, nor is it for the Chair. It is for the House of Commons to determine whether that is acceptable or not.

Those pieces of business proposed by the Opposition House Leader are clearly those which stand on the Notice Paper. I betray no confidence in saying that they are also pieces of business which the Government has already presented as its