

Point of Order—Mr. Riis

the rights of Members of the House to seek information and to learn the truth.

Mr. Crosby: Yes, it has changed. We have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Riis: I am at a loss to understand why Members of the House in 1989 are denied, if you like, the opportunity that was available to Members who represented our grandparents.

I trust that you will find an error has been made in the placement of Motion No. 490 in my name under Private Members' Business and will direct that it be moved to Notices of Motion.

• (1130)

I would like to address briefly the concerns that you and other Members have made about the risks of allowing a motion from this side of the House to be debated during Routine Proceedings. There is perhaps a genuine fear that these motions by the Opposition are an attempt to hijack the House. This argument is clearly false and trivializes serious questions that a number of Hon. Members, including the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) and the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) are trying to have answered in the House. If this motion and that of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition were to be placed under Motions, under the rubric of Routine Proceedings, at most three hours, and more likely two hours, of House time would be used to debate the motion. Subsequently, the motion would become transferred to Government Orders and it is only the prerogative of the Government to call it for debate. In other words, just as the Government can talk out Private Members' Hour, so too can it talk out any motion moved during Routine Proceedings. However, that does not diminish the seriousness and the importance of having such a motion debated.

This is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and we ought to have the right to have it moved to the proper place in Routine Proceedings so that an opposition Member may on occasion have such a motion debated.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, my reply will be very brief because I believe that under Government Orders we ought to proceed with the motion that was called for debate and has been moved by the Minister.

There have been many changes in the Standing Orders from time to time. If the Chair were to examine the titles of Routine Proceedings, there is private Members' Business, Government Business and Motions. By practice, most of the items that have been handled under Motions

have been items of routine business and items where there has been agreement between the Parties that a matter would be dealt with in an expeditious manner under that heading. There has been ample opportunity for Members to put forward private enterprises or efforts.

At a later date, Mr. Speaker, I will be getting into the question of whether or not it is appropriate to flood, if I may use that word, private Members' motions and the actual text of the motions that are there. We are in the process of doing an analysis of that. I do not believe that is what Private Members' Hour was intended for. We feel, and it seems to have worked pretty well on the first mandate, that it was intended to allow Members to bring forward items which would be considered for full debate by the Private Members' committee. That has worked pretty well in the past. There have been Private Members' Bills passed right through all three stages because they were not "talked out".

The Government stands behind that principle, but I believe we will be suggesting some changes to that. As an aside, the Government's view is that the Table's slotting of motions has been impeccable up until now. Their judgment has been very sound. We believe that the Right Hon. Member from Vancouver Quadra's motion is in the right place and that when it is transferred from the notice paper my hon. friend from Kamloop's motion will be in the correct place. I would submit that these matters should be treated as a Private Member's motion.

Mr. Crosby: I would like to make a brief intervention, Mr. Speaker, in light of the arguments raised by the Member from British Columbia with respect to the procedures in the House of Commons. I would remind the Chair and all Members that in 1981 and 1982 we made a dramatic change in the laws of Canada. We passed constitutional provisions that included the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter contains provisions that dramatically affect the way the law is administered throughout Canada and the powers of Parliament. We stood and voted in favour of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that dramatically restricted the powers of the House of Commons. When we try to rely on ancient precedents and traditions requiring people to appear before the Bar of the House of Commons in accordance with Parliamentary tradition, we forget that we have enacted a law that gives to those very people the rights and protection of the law. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that when you are considering these parliamentary precedents, you recognize the Canadian Charter of