

Extension of Sittings

section 49 refers only to substantive issues, and when such issues are put before the House, the House decides.

● (1650)

[English]

If it referred to procedural matters, Mr. Speaker, we would still be in the situation where in former Parliaments one could appeal decisions of the Chair. Do you remember? We do not do that any more. That has been changed. Nobody in this House would dare reinstate that procedure, but we used to be able to appeal decisions of the Chair.

I want to talk about the Hon. James McGrath, Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland. In the debate on the reform of the House of Commons and the Government's response to committee recommendations he said—I hear some Members of the government side do not want me to quote what Mr. McGrath had to say. I had a lot of time for Jim. I think he did a terrific job for this House in bringing forth the reform of the House and I appreciate the great contribution he made. At page 9150 of *Hansard* for December 4, 1985 he said:

We hope that the Government will give us a chance to function as legislators.

Further on in the text at page 9151 he makes a very interesting statement:

I hope in saying this that the Government will not lose the spirit which prompted it to start this reform process in the first place because if there is one thing this Government will be remembered for, among all others, it will be its determination to reform this place in order to make it more meaningful for the people of Canada.

That is what this place is all about, Mr. Speaker. It is supposed to allow for debate, but the Government does not believe that. It thinks it can suspend debates and have its way despite the fact that we have adopted a Standing Order which says that the Government cannot do that, unless the Speaker has been asked and there has been consultation. Standing Order 5 reads:

Whenever the House stands adjourned, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Government—

The Government will be consulted, so why it would want to go around the Speaker, beats me, unless there is such arrogance—

Some Hon. Members: Come on!

Mr. Gauthier: I cannot read anything else except arrogance on the part of the Government in trying to use its massive majority to demean the minority and to have its way. I will reread the first Standing Order for members of the Government who do not understand the meaning of it. Standing Order 1 states:

In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other Order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker or Chairman, whose decisions shall be based on the usages, forms, customs and precedents of the House of Commons of Canada and on parliamentary tradition in Canada and other jurisdictions, so far as they may be applicable to the House.

There is, in my view, a strong case to be made for this motion to be ruled out of order by the Speaker because it breaches the Standing Orders of the House. It is not in the spirit of the Standing Orders as we have developed them over the years. It took dozens of years to come to a point where we can have a sensible, reasonable agenda. The Government is playing havoc with it.

We were called back here last August 11 and we have worked since then. We are not the only ones. I think of the 2,800 support personnel in this House who have given us their sweat and their competence since last August and who will not have any holidays if this lousy Government has its way. I say to them: "Don't blame me. Blame the government Members. They are the ones preventing you from having a decent break after 11 months of hard work". I do not think the government Members should laugh when I say that because it is difficult for people in this place. It is difficult to take that kind of arrogance from that Government.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper).

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a number of points. First, and I do not think this one has been made clearly yet, the Government may be abusing the Opposition in this House by the way it is treating the rules. The Government is also abusing the Chair.

Mr. Fennell: Where have you been for the last three weeks?

Mr. Keeper: Under the rules of this Chamber, the Standing Orders, the Speaker makes the decision about whether the sittings of the House will be extended into the summer. The Government by putting in this notwithstanding motion is taking away the power of the Chair to make that decision and vesting it in the majority in this House. It is seeking to take away the prerogatives that have been given to the Chair by the rules of this House.

I believe the motion is out of order for a basic reason. When considering the motion we have to go back to basics. I refer to Beauchesne. In Chapter 1 under the Content and Sources of Parliamentary Procedure, we find Principles of Parliamentary Law. Citation 1 reads:

The principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have always been steadily in view by the Canadian Parliament; these are: To protect the minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner.

It mentions both requirements, to assure the orderly transaction of public business and to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. If there is one thing that this motion does, it is to fail to protect the minority.

● (1700)

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Keeper) is unfortunately caught by the clock. It is five o'clock, and I know the Hon. Member will understand that I am