

Canada Flag Day

I hope that after we are used to the idea of Canada flag day being an important day in the Canadian calendar, we will take the further step suggested in my Bill C-79 and make it, as well as an August holiday, a holiday under the provisions of the Canada Labour Code so that all people across Canada will be able to enjoy it.

However, for the moment all one needs to say is that just as it was an historic day eight years ago, which some of us well remember, here on Parliament Hill, so this is an historic day and I suppose congratulations should be extended to all hon. members that this House seems to be ready to pass this bill.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) and myself had discussions prior to commencing this private members' hour, the result of which was altered when the hon. member for Cochrane subsequently came back to us and altered conditions upon which the previous discussions were held. I am not rising to prevent the passage of the bill and the sending of it to the committee, but it was my understanding that we should be using, except for five minutes, the whole of the private members' hour for estimates. That went by the board, and I explained to the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) that the rest went by the board as well.

So we are prepared on this side to let the bill go to committee, but we are rather impressed by the fact that there have been several motions and several bills passed and sent to committee which were introduced by hon. members on my left as well as hon. members opposite. I think that some fairness should be shown here. My colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), has had on the order paper Bill C-95 in this session and similar bills in previous sessions respecting Sir John A. Macdonald day. Surely there can be no greater Canadian in our historical past who would merit a legal holiday and this matter would merit the attention of the committee.

Therefore, before the expiry of private members' hour, having regard to the sense of fairness in having legislation of private members from all sides considered in a fair way, I propose that we permit the bill of the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Nelson) to go to committee provided that hon. members are in agreement that Bill C-95, sponsored by the hon. member for Hillsborough, will also go with it as decided in the same private members' hour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: If there is general agreement, I will say no more and simply resume my seat to see whether or not there is that agreement.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has put me in a somewhat impossible position. Perhaps I might explain to him and to the House the way in which we have been attempting to proceed with the private members' hour of late. We have worked out an agreement with the government House leader and the cabinet that we will examine each proposal put forward by hon. members to see whether or not they are acceptable. We have done this with the

first 20 items of bills and notices of motions. What we have done is to make a list of these; we have examined them and we are trying to come to some agreement with the cabinet to either accept or reject them.

It is our hope that as this new practice becomes established we will be able to accept many more private members' bills and notices of motion than has been the case in the past. Unfortunately, I am in the position where I cannot accept the offer made by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) until I have had an opportunity to discuss it with the House leader and with members of the cabinet.

However, I can say that I would certainly have no objection to the same procedure being followed with respect to Bill C-95 as was followed with the bill under discussion. I have no objection to private members' bill or notices of motions from all parties being discussed and cleared in this way. I regret that under the circumstances I cannot accept the proposal put forward by the hon. member for Yukon. However, I hope that in explaining the way in which we are trying to treat private members' hour to make it more significant for members, hon. members opposite will permit this bill to go forward, and I promise in the future to give every consideration to bills that come before us and hope it will become the practice, and not the exception, in the private members' hour.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I rise on a point of order. I shall refrain from asking what happened to the agreement that I thought we had. I do not like this, but I suppose something must have changed. I hope, however, that the fundamental aspect of that agreement, namely, that this bill be allowed to have second reading and go to committee, might be sustained. I wonder therefore, since the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) is not in a position to agree to the passing of the bill in the name of the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), whether a compromise could be reached by giving second reading to the bill we are now discussing and by the House passing an order right now putting the bill of the hon. member for Hillsborough at the top of the list of public bills so that it will come up for discussion next time we come to this hour.

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Speaker, I want to make one observation on the suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The placing of a bill at the top of the list gives no assurance whatsoever of its passage. It will be talked out almost certainly. We would have to have an assurance that it would be dealt with if it were given such priority, that the motion would come to a vote and that it would be sent to the committee at the next private members' hour. We had the spectacle only yesterday of generosity being returned by the very opposite action on very similar matters. Regretfully, I have to say that before I go blindly into such an arrangement I want to know what all the consequences might be.

Mr. Nielsen: I have another suggestion to make, that rather than going along the route suggested by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, we stand this bill—if permission is necessary to get approval of my original proposal—and deal with it in the next private members' hour.