

*Business of the House*

under Standing Order 6(5)(a) or even under Standing Order 26, where a specific and perhaps exceptional procedure is proposed by the Standing Order.

I think it should be mentioned, to be fair to hon. members, that we are not dealing with something which, in practice, is all that serious. If the Chair were to rule that 48 hours notice is required, it would mean that the notice would be filed this afternoon before six o'clock and, instead of the motion being moved tomorrow, it would be moved on Friday. I appreciate that 24 hours difference and an additional day's debate in the House is a matter of importance. I am not trying to minimize that at all. However, we are not dealing with anything which is basic or substantial. I would think that the Chair would find it very difficult to convince himself that the provisions of Standing Order 42(1) apply to this case and that 48 hours written notice is required. I have to take the Standing Order as it is presented to me. That is what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre suggested. He stated a moment ago that he does not often disagree with the hon. member for Peace River. I would say that although I sometimes disagree with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, in this case I think his interpretation of the Standing Order is closer to mine than that proposed by the hon. member for Peace River. I would think I would have to rule that the notice of intention proposed by the President of the Privy Council would meet the requirements of the Standing Order as it appears in the Standing Orders of the House at the present time.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order which does not arise from the notice or from your ruling. Some days ago I asked the government House leader whether the standing committees of the House would sit while the tax bill was being debated before the committee of the whole House. Since the guillotine is going to fall, I would think that the government and the government House leader ought to act in the best interests of Parliament. These committees have been sitting. I had to attend a committee session yesterday, because I was obliged to, and I therefore missed a part of the debate on the tax bill. If the guillotine is to be lowered, let the government introduce some procedure under which Members of Parliament can express their views on a bill as important as the tax bill.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Woolliams:** Although I have not looked this up, I recall that when I raised this matter with the government House leader he suggested and gave me to understand without any qualification that there would not be any standing committees sitting. We find ourselves involved in this sort of procedure because the government will not even accede to our suggestion and split the bill.

**An hon. Member:** Guillotine MacEachen.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, more than once I gave assurances to the House that I would attempt to reduce the sittings of committees at times when we were sitting in committee of the whole on the tax bill. If you look at the record you will see that while this bill has been in committee of the whole very few committees have been sitting.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr. MacEachen:** It has not always been possible to prevent sittings of committees, because chairmen of committees and other hon. members of the House who have rights, as has my hon. friend who has raised the objection, have come to me and said that for one reason or another a committee must sit. This applies to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates because it is operating under a dead-line of its own. Today, for reasons which the chairman can explain, a particular committee will sit. I do not think it is a great obligation on members of the House, even though I am striving to cut down the number of sittings of standing committees, to expect them to attend one or two committee meetings while the House is sitting in Committee of the Whole. If I may say so, Mr. Speaker, from my own observation of the Committee of the Whole members are not impeded in attending the committee because of other committee sittings. I think it is because they have other responsibilities not in the standing committees which have prevented them being in the chamber in the last few weeks.

• (3:30 p.m.)

**Mr. Woolliams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I have not read it, but if my memory serves me right—I have not checked it today because this matter arose after the notice and ruling were given—the government House leader said there would not be sittings. He did not say that some would not sit and others would. I would like to hear him say that he gave his word to the House that the committees would not sit.

**Mr. Horner:** On this point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to say what was said by the government House leader or by the House leader of the Conservative party. I wonder if we could have an indication from the House leader of the government concerning what will happen now that closure has been invoked by the government. Will the committees continue to sit during the four-day debate on the tax legislation? Could we have some statement from the House leader in that regard? Surely, owing to the country's concern over this tax bill, no committees should sit except the Committee of the Whole of the House of Commons.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to advise my hon. friend that closure has not been invoked and it is not the intention of the government to invoke closure on this particular bill. This is an entirely separate procedure. I will tell my hon. friend what I told the hon. member for Calgary North earlier, that I will do my very best to reduce the number of committees or eliminate them entirely. I do not remember exactly what I said at the time and neither does my hon. friend, but I did say I would cut them down as much as possible and I will do that during the next few days.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)