

Government Orders

series of amendments which would give members an opportunity to state their positions clearly.

The House has also considered amendments to Standing Orders which touch on one or more aspects of our House business. Today's motion though is unique in that it does not come from a committee study, where an opportunity exists to put forward concerns, and nor has there been an arrangement made among the parties to reach some accommodation with regard to voting.

It will not be possible for Motion No. 30 to be amended sufficiently to permit members to divide up the question for themselves and vote yes to those sections they support and no to others. The government, it is reported, will not entertain a long debate on this motion. It has been suggested that closure will be moved later this week.

If that is the case, it is unlikely that there will be an opportunity for more than one amendment to be presented. The two major parties will have the opportunity to have their views on the record; the government's view contained in the motion and the Official Opposition's view contained in its amendment. There will not be an opportunity for an official view to come from the New Democratic Party, from the Bloc Quebecois, from the Reform Party, from any of the independents or indeed any opportunity for government backbenchers to voice their concerns.

Unlike the experience of the House on constitutional issues, there is apparently no willingness in this House to accommodate those members by permitting a series of amendments to be put to the floor. My colleagues on all sides may agree with much that is contained in Motion No. 30. I agree with many of the 64 proposals, but I disagree vehemently with others, as do other members in the House.

How can we vote yes to something that contains so much with which we disagree and vote no to something that contains so many sensible proposals?

Madam Speaker, I would ask you to use your discretion, as is clearly possible in this circumstance, and consider the precedent of 1964. I ask you to divide Motion No. 30 into the five distinct motions I mentioned earlier and to permit each to be debated, amended and voted on separately.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I will not be long in my intervention, but I do want to indicate a few difficulties that I have with the

proposal from the hon. member for the New Democratic Party.

To begin with, the relationship between hours of sitting and other rule changes respecting the manner in which legislation is dealt with and so on is not separate, they are related. One cannot, on the one hand, change the rules respecting the days, hours we sit and so on while, at the same time, carrying along those rules respecting length of speeches, length of debate that were appropriate for a different calendar. They are related. The separations that the hon. member suggests would be inappropriate because you cannot have one without the other.

I do acknowledge that there are some separations. The committee —part of it— does stand on its own from the other things. Certainly, if that were suggested as separate votes, I do not have any particular problem with that.

I do have to take this opportunity to make a couple of points. The hon. member said this is unique in terms of rule changes. He is inaccurate. In 1969, there were major rule changes brought forward. This is not a unique occurrence in that regard. They did not come from some other source, they came from the government.

The other problem I have is this. These rule changes are a result of negotiation discussions that go back over a year. I will go into some more detail on it during the debate. What we have is this phenomenon. I proposed, on behalf of the government, a major set of changes which I gave to the other major parties and said: "Consider them". They came back and said: "We do not like this, we do not like that, we do not like this". Some of what they did not like we said: "Okay, we will take that away even though having them would have been nice from the perspective of the government House leader". In other words, we negotiated. We negotiated and arrived at a final package that had a lot of give-up on our side and acceptances. We did not accept all their suggestions. I am not implying that. Nor did they say at all times that they agreed fully with the total package, but we did have a negotiation.

Now what the hon. member is really saying by his suggestion is we now want the opportunity to put into our pocket, as collected and received, all of those things we gave up in the negotiation, but we want the right to challenge and vote against, in as many different ways as possible, those things we did not. It is a kind of have your cake and eat it philosophy. It is the way they have been operating in committees, I am told, where in fact they sit down in a standing committee study, demand that the