

*Extension of Sittings*

recorded in the *Journals* for that day, there are several additional comments relating to procedure. I think it would be useful to quote an excerpt from that part dealing with the question of notice. That is the critical point I wish to make right now and it concerns the appropriateness of giving notice and where it stands on the Order Paper. At page 746 of *Journals* for June 14, 1955, we find the following:

That motions for the concurrence in reports of any standing or special committee, for the suspension of any Standing Order, or other such motions as may be required for the observances of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of its authority, the appointment or conduct of its officers, the management of its business, the arrangement of its proceedings, the correctness of its records, the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meetings or adjournment shall be listed, where notice is required, called and disposed of under "Motions".

Clearly this sets out the practice that is to be followed in the case of motions which seek to change our sitting days and the times of our meetings or adjournments. Such motions must be listed under Motions.

Third, I wish to bring to your attention the lack of precedents to support the Government's case on this issue. As I indicated last Tuesday, prior to the 1955 revision of the Standing Orders it was not unusual for motions regulating the days and times of sittings of the House to be given notice under Government Notices of Motions. Such motions were then transferred to Government Orders were they were moved and debated. However, after the Procedure Committee's report in June of 1955, I have been unable to find a single example of where such motions were not given notice and debated under Motions. Not a single precedent after 1955. This fact cannot be simply dismissed. It is significant and relevant to our debate today. Precedent is a critical component of how this House regulates its business and cannot be ignored.

When the Government chose to give notice of this motion under Government Notices of Motions, it violated the practices of this House since 1955, some 33 years ago. I know that, being a student of parliamentary procedure and traditions, you will appreciate the fact that a practice we have followed for 33 years has obviously proven its value and we ought to be following it in the years ahead unless a clear case can be made against it, or there is unanimous consent of the Members of the House to proceed in some other fashion. Barring that, and simply recognizing the will of the Government to act on this point, I think it is important for you to recognize that a precedent set 33 years ago and followed continuously since then, as far as I can determine, ought to be continued.

That was the basis of my argument on Tuesday and I certainly stand by it again today. I can find no reason why we should at this moment depart from that practice of the House.

Furthermore, you will know that in the last several years the Standing Orders and the practices of the House have undergone a further review just as they did in 1955, for the purpose of making Parliament a more effective and vital institution. We made many changes to the rules governing Private

Members' Business which have enhanced the role of the Private Member. I suggest that the recent passage of Bill C-204 in the name of the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) is a testament to the growing influence of Private Members, and all of us are appreciative of that change.

Another innovation was the establishment of a parliamentary calendar so that Members on all sides know when the House will be sitting and when it will be adjourned. This helps Members plan their agenda and maximize the time they can spend with their constituents. Implicit in the establishment of this calendar was the recognition that the Government would have to regulate its legislative agenda to conform with the days of sitting. Unfortunately, the Government has shown a particular inability to manage its parliamentary calendar to meet the Standing Orders and the fact that we have agreed unanimously to follow a calendar in order to carry out the business of the people of Canada.

I want to add to that by saying right from the beginning we have had no hesitation in working in the House or beyond. I do not think that is in question. The fact we have been in session for nearly 11 months straight speaks well of the intention and commitment of Members of Parliament to serve their constituents. I do not think you will find many Parliaments in this world that would have sat for 11 months straight and are quite prepared to continue on.

When the Standing Orders were changed unanimously by Members of the House to institute a calendar, that allowed Members on certain weeks of the year and for the months of July and August to be able to set up rounds of meetings with their constituents. For those of us who have to travel 4,000 or 5,000 kilometres to our constituents on a weekend, it is difficult to serve our constituents. For that reason we welcomed a parliamentary calendar.

I submit that having a parliamentary calendar does not prohibit us from sitting in the summer. That is not the point here. If the Government felt there was an emergency or crisis facing the country, it can ask you to recall Parliament to deal with that situation. Last summer the Government determined that we had an emergency with respect to immigration and refugees. The Government appealed to you and, given the information it provided you with, you in your wisdom decided to ask Members to come back from their summer break, where they were serving their constituents, to deal with the legislation. I did not think at that time it was an emergency situation, but the Government made its case and in your wisdom you decided that was the case.

• (1600)

That still exists. We are not suggesting that under no circumstances will we ever not sit during July and August. The point, as any good businessman or businesswoman would know, is that you have to be able to plan ahead, you have to be able to conduct your business in a businesslike way, and that