

Extension of Hours

Yes, we are willing to discuss House business. We are willing to discuss the order of business. However, why did he not make any suggestion on how to use the extended hours in our meeting? Never did he make any counter-proposal to the proposals I made. Why wait until we are on the floor of the House to try to negotiate this kind of business? The Hon. Member knows very well that under the Standing Orders it is up to the Government to establish the order of business. I will argue later on the admissibility of his amendment. However, I accept his good faith.

[Translation]

I presume that he is acting in good faith.

[English]

I would like the Hon. Member to convince me further by telling us why he did not raise this matter earlier when he had full opportunity to raise it with me.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I must express my shock and amazement. You will notice that I referred to the order of the proposals I put forward without suggesting where that order was first brought forward. I consider any discussions in meetings of Government House Leaders to be private and I am surprised that the Government House Leader has now revealed to the House of Commons what went on. I am sure that my friend, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), will share my surprise and concern that we now have our private meetings being brought forward in the House of Commons.

In reply to the question asked as to why the amendment was only received just now, I must say that I received the motion only at ten minutes to three o'clock with the wording on the back of an envelope. I do not feel at all embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, since the Government has had three months to prepare the motion. I do not feel at all embarrassed in giving the House Leader the amendment to the motion which I had to meld into the wording of the original motion at 25 minutes after three o'clock.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, the alleged breaking of the secrecy of House Leaders' meetings is not the same as hypocrisy or bad faith. My hon. colleague knows very well that sometimes what is discussed in our meetings has to be made public—at least in our caucus, and therefore it is public. He knows very well that when I ask him to go to his caucus if he wishes and make the proposal of sitting until 11 o'clock at night, giving him the programs suggested to be dealt with until the end of June, that that cannot stay within our meetings. That information must go out. So I am not doing anything wrong. I am just asking him very honestly why did he not negotiate with me the substance of the amendment he has just proposed. He had two opportunities to do that, today and yesterday. I am just testing the good faith of my hon. colleague; I am not accusing him of doing anything wrong.

● (1540)

Mr. Lewis: I appreciate, Mr. Speaker that the Government House leader is not accusing me of doing anything wrong. I
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should tell you that yesterday obviously we had to consider the Government House Leader's suggestion. Today I am not so sure we were asked if there was an amendment. In any event, I feel we on this side are completely able to operate as the Opposition must in order to facilitate the business of the House. We have simply taken the Government's legislative program, spelled out how we are prepared to deal with it in the extended hours, and we say to the Government: support our motion and in those extended hours we will work on those Bills.

Mr. Collette: Mr. Speaker, I requested a copy of the proposed amendment by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) a few moments ago. I was told by the Table that they were unable to give me a copy. I submit that if the Chair is going to entertain arguments as to the admissibility of that amendment, then surely all Members would be entitled to a copy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The point is well taken. As is obvious, copies are being made and will be distributed immediately.

Mr. Lewis: My colleague makes a very interesting point. If that concern is shown for the amendment, surely the same concern should be shown for the motion. We have not had a copy of the motion produced.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is not telling the truth in so far as he is concerned.

Mr. Lewis: Careful.

Mr. Pinard: I saw that he had a copy of the motion before I moved it—

Mr. Lewis: I meant the House.

Mr. Pinard: Oh, he is still playing with words.

If you allow me, Mr. Speaker, I would like to illustrate very briefly why from my point of view the amendment proposed by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North is not in accordance with the Standing Orders. The motion deals with, as it must, merely the hours of sitting and not with the legislative program of the Government. Standing Order 9(1) reads:

On the tenth sitting day preceding June 30 a motion to extend the hours of sitting to a specific hour during the last ten sitting days may be proposed, without notice, by any Member during Routine Proceedings.

I do not think this opens the door to any proposal, whether it is in the main motion or an amendment, concerning the business to be dealt with in those hours. This could be, of course, subject to a House order if a motion was moved under another Standing Order by a Minister of the Crown. But it is spelled out in my motion that I have moved this under Standing Order 9, and all that can be dealt with under that Standing Order is the extension of hours from now until the end of June and nothing else.

The spirit of my argument is also based on Standing Order 22(2), which says very clearly: