

gave a legitimate defence, though I confess I should like to add a few items to his list.

**Mr. Whelan:** So would I.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** So would another hon. member. Legislation respecting motor vehicle safety is a good example of a subject that has been brought forward for discussion by private members in private members' hour in the form of bills or resolutions. I would also point out that for many years the Order Paper had on it bills respecting all the various aspects of the Labour Code. I hasten to add that they were not all my bills; there were bills moved by Liberals and Conservatives too, depending on which party was in power. In this way we have through the years popularized several ideas in the area of establishing a federal Labour Code.

In addition to this, we put through income tax deductibility for trade union dues some years ago through the use of private members' hour. We also had accepted the right for recipients of unemployment insurance to continue to draw unemployment benefits once they became sick—provided, of course, they had started to draw the benefits before the sickness occurred. This is a matter we are now trying to extend in committee.

I am not suggesting, any more than the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra was, that the bills or resolutions brought in in private members' hour were passed; when it came to legislation it was usually in the form of a government bill. But I think it is fair to say that through the use of this hour, private members popularized an idea which it sold to Parliament generally and to the government in particular.

Many pension matters have been dealt with over the years in this way. Hospitalization was one subject, and so was medicare. A few bills did not succeed: I have yet to get rid of the Senate by means of a private member's bill, though at least last year we had a vote and a few good men and true from the other side joined us on the vote. So at least we are on the way.

I do not wish to take more time since other members want to speak, but I give my wholehearted support to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). I appreciate the goodwill and the good intentions of the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra in their suggestion of a broader reference; but judging from my own experience on the Procedure and Organization Committee during the last two or three years, I do not think this would work. We had a broad reference last time, and under this broad reference some of us raised the question of doing something about private members' hour. However, we were told that other matters had higher priority. I am afraid that on a committee with a government majority and with a reference that covered everything, we would again be told there are proposals of the government that take top priority.

I would not mind my hon. friend's resolution being broadened to include further matters of concern to pri-

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vate members; but I think I speak not only for the members of the opposition but also for the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart), the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan) and others when I say that in addition to bills and resolutions we could do other things under the rules to strengthen the position of private members.

We are not trying to take away the power and initiative of the government in so far as the introduction of legislation is concerned. But we do think that something better than just talking out private members' bills in this hour should be found. I am glad the hon. member for Peace River did not put specific proposals in his motion, though he did indicate some of the things that might be done. It seems to me that at this point, rather than giving a general reference which would result in priority being given to matters of concern to the government, in the name of the private members on both sides of the House we should have a study made by the Committee on Procedure and Organization on ways and means of improving the lot of private members and improving the chance of getting their proposals properly considered by the House of Commons.

**Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster):** Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to speak to this motion because I had understood via the "grape vine" that it was going to be accepted. It now appears the motion is going to be talked out, though I stand to be corrected on that. The fact it is going to be talked out is, surely, proof in itself of the futility and the failure of private members' hour. Here we are, discussing a motion that all hon. members who have spoken so far seem to agree with, yet it is not going to be accepted on any terms. As I say, that in itself is an indication that private members' hour is not working.

I am not going over the history that has been very well outlined by previous speakers. Members on both sides of the House have been involved in the private members' hour and there is a record of some success in respect of various subjects that have been introduced not only in bills but in motions. I deplore the lack of attention that is given private members' hour by ministers of the Crown. I recall the day when a certain minister—I do not think I should hesitate to mention his name; he was a former Minister of Justice, Hon. Stuart Garson—never failed to speak on a motion that had any connection with justice. We all gave him considerable credit. In many cases he talked the bills out, but it showed the importance he attached to private members' hour.

• (5:40 p.m.)

During the years, this hour has fallen into a different position of importance here. I gave the government considerable credit last year when it started to refer some of these bills to committee. I thought this was a step in the right direction. It was rather mysterious that most of the bills seemed to be from the government, but nevertheless it was a move in the right direction. I only hope that this very commendable motion does get before the committee in a very forceful and definite way.