

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 1, 1990

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that today is a New Democratic Party opposition day on an important environmental issue. There have been consultations among the Parties and while we were anticipating having a vote at the conclusion of today's debate, there has been agreement that the vote be postponed until Monday at six, with the understanding that we would now go through the normal Routine Proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice on the same point of order.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm that there have been those consultations and that it is agreeable with the government. I think you would find confirmation from the Official Opposition too. I appreciate that it is on the record. It should perhaps be formally recognized as an Order of the House, in whatever way the Chair wishes to formalize that suggestion and to make it official.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, we would certainly concur. Given that we have new hours on Monday and people realize that the House starts at one o'clock instead of the usual 11 o'clock, we agree that six o'clock is an appropriate time for the vote, but it will be on government time, I take it, and the additional time taken for the vote will not be added on to the day. With that caveat we agree.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, to be a little more precise, is the member suggesting that the vote on Monday be at 6.45?

Mr. Gauthier: Six.

Mr. Hawkes: The normal Monday hours for government business under the new system run from three o'clock until seven o'clock. If the vote were to occur at the conclusion of government business, then it would occur at seven, with a 15 minute bell. If he is asking for it to take part of government time, then I would assume that the bells would ring at 6.45 or maybe 6.30. Is the hon. member suggesting that government business be interrupted at some other hour for the holding of the vote? If somebody wants to make a suggestion, the government would be receptive to hearing exactly when we should have that vote on Monday.

Let us remember, Mr. Speaker, that one of the reasons we changed the hours for Mondays was to allow an opportunity for members to arrive at the House for deferred votes on a Monday. That is the reason we said let's vote more often at seven o'clock on deferred votes rather than at six o'clock. Is there some desire to change that for this one occasion?

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier further and then I will hear the hon. member for Kamloops.

• (1110)

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, since I raised the issue, I would like to add this comment. The government whip and I can always ask the Chair to defer a vote. In this case, that is not allowed. However, with the assent of the New Democratic Party and with their initiative, I agree that the vote can be deferred to Monday at six o'clock. I understand that the bells would ring at 5.45 p.m., and vote taken after that.

The reason is that normally we would have the vote at three o'clock after Question Period and Routine Proceedings. That would be the normal procedure, but to give a chance to western members to be here—and I hear the government whips clearly—I think six o'clock is appropriate. I hope we understand each other. Committees sit Monday night and committees have difficulties. There are six or seven committees sitting. The difficulty I have is allowing members to be here to vote, have their supper and then get back to their committees. We would be flexible and understanding of members' obligations to