

*National Defence Act Amendment*

Sometimes this is done by agreement. Standing order 15 (3) specifically sets out the order of business for Friday. There is provision there that the hour from five to six o'clock shall be private members hour for the consideration of private bills and public bills.

Nothing has transpired in this house to indicate that private members hour shall be suspended, or that private members shall be deprived of their time.

Quite frequently during this session the government has made a request to abrogate the private members right in respect of this hour. Quite frequently that request has been granted. On several occasions I have protested because I think private members are being careless in the protection of their rights. I am afraid that if they yield too frequently the government will take over this time for the consideration of government business.

The order paper indicates there are 175 public bills standing in the names of private members. Some of those bills have not been reached during this lengthy session while others have been up for discussion and adjourned. Very frequently we talk about obtaining decisions in respect of these bills. If private members hour is to be discontinued in order to consider government business there will be an infringement on the rights of private members. This will prevent a decision in respect of important bills, important not only to the members who introduced them, but also to the country.

● (5:10 p.m.)

As pointed out very clearly by the hon. member who has just spoken, the order under which we have been operating up to five o'clock says nothing specifically about suspending private members hour. I doubt very much if any government would take away private members time without consent, in the one instance, or without specifically mentioning that fact in a motion. I know that from time to time when we have reached a point within days or weeks of concluding a session, we have had motions put forward to the effect that private members hours will be eliminated in order that government business may be considered. This, however, is done clearly and openly and the motion is subject to debate and vote.

In this particular instance, working under this new rule which the government devised, there is nothing to indicate that private members hour would be eliminated on any day. If the government had intended to eliminate private members hour when we were in this

[Mr. Churchill.]

closure operation, that would have been so specified. It is not so specified here. The other point that was made by the hon. member who preceded me was that in the section which has been quoted, except for the first sentence, it applies to third reading proceedings. I do not see there that private members business is struck out. Perhaps this is the result of careless drafting, but in all other sections of this order, such as subsection 6, there is an indication that Mr. Speaker shall, at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business, interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put the question.

I would think, by inference, that what is intended is that this is government time that is being used for this special purpose and not private members time. I am sure that the government never intended to encroach so seriously on private members hour. I do not want to encroach any longer on private members hour. I am here to defend the rights of private members. I hope that you will find it in your power, Mr. Chairman, to rule that we should now proceed immediately to private members business, which will be public bills.

**Mr. Winch:** I rise, Mr. Chairman, strictly in search of information. I find myself completely stumped. It is my understanding that under a decision which was reached by a majority vote in the House of Commons, for every five minutes we lose in a procedural discussion we are losing five minutes of the time permitted for discussion of the 65 clauses of a most important bill. We have already lost sixteen minutes of time allotted for the discussion of this bill. May I ask whether it would not be possible to proceed so that we spend time on this bill and not lose a second, because we require every second—I think this is the position of the Conservatives—so that we might discuss the 65 clauses.

**Mr. Olson:** I believe, Mr. Chairman, you will have to look at standing order 15A, paragraph 7. The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has already drawn this to your attention. There is a sentence which commences:

Such an order having been called on any Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday, it shall have precedence over all other business until the time of adjournment on that day, unless it is disposed of earlier.

I think what you will have to do, Mr. Chairman, is decide whether that sentence relates to the first or last part of paragraph 7. I suggest to you that it relates only to