

Private Members' Hour

This is no concession in lieu of a new Speech from the Throne, as has been represented by the New Democratic Party. This is what I think should be done under the circumstances. The question of whether we will have a Speech from the Throne is quite a separate question. I suggest that my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would rather have a grievance than have private member's rights restored. This seems to be the situation for which he has argued. He says, for example, that he would rather this motion did not pass the House because he would prefer to have a Speech from the Throne. What he wants is a grievance that the government has not undertaken to start another session.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have lots of grievances with this government. I do not need another one.

Mr. Sharp: I wish the hon. member had said that. I am sure members on all sides would like to have these private members' rights restored. Perhaps I might make some other comments. The first concerns the reason for the length of this session. If one looks back at the record of some recent sessions, it will be clear that a great backlog of unfinished legislation accumulated during minority parliaments.

It was the view of the government that, if possible, we should try to avoid that happening again. It has been our wish to clear the order paper of all the bills that had accumulated over a considerable period. This we have been trying to do. There have been some very contentious pieces of legislation. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre compared the situation with Westminster. I would point out to him that, of course, Westminster operates under very different rules. He knows this. The British government can put forward a firm schedule of bills to be completed within a session, in the knowledge that it has the rules for the purpose of getting it approved. We do now have these rules.

During this session there have been debates of enormous length which would never have been permitted under the rules of Westminster. So I agree with the hon. member for Fundy-Royal that surely in this parliament we should be making a fundamental review of our rules so that this sort of situation does not occur again, and so the government will know that when it puts forward a program of legislation, that program will be substantially completed within a year. We must show some restraint on our side in not encumbering the order paper with too many bills. On the other hand, I am sure hon. members would agree that the bills which have been put down have been important, essential legislation. We did not put down a lot of bills which we did not have confidence would be approved.

● (1440)

We believe—perhaps the NDP does not—that the time has come for some restraint in government spending. On this side I think we have the support at least of the Conservative party. Whenever we bring forward legislation to do this, it is an excuse for holding up the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Don't clutch us too close to your bosom.

Mr. Sharp: There have been some references to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization covering some of the points that have been raised here. For example, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) has been instructed by the committee to bring in terms of reference on private members' hour for the proper use of that hour, another member on the management of time, another on the work of committees. These are the fundamental questions. I do urge upon the House that this committee be allowed to make rapid progress, which is only possible with the co-operation of the House leaders and of the parties concerned, not just of individual members, and that when the report is made it will be dealt with expeditiously.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have had information given to me which is relevant with respect to what we have been talking about. I was given to understand that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) has announced outside the House of Commons a large wheat sale to the U.S.S.R.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I do not want to prevent the hon. member from raising his point of order, but I thought the point of order was related to the proceedings of the House. If the hon. member wishes to raise that point of order, I suggest that he raise it at the end of routine proceedings just before we go on to government orders, once a vote has been taken on the motion before us. I think at that time there will also be more members in the House.

I will now put the question to the House, and after we have reached orders of the day I will call upon the hon. member. The question is on the motion of Mr. Sharp. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.
And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion (Mr. Sharp) which was agreed to on the following division:

● (1450)

(Division No. 112)

YEAS
Messrs.

Abbott
Alkenbrack
Andras
(Port Arthur)

Appolloni (Mrs.)
Baker
(Grenville-Carleton)
Beatty

Bégin (Miss)
Blaker
Blouin
Breau