

Private Members' Business

the hon. member for Parkdale-High Park (Mr. Flis)—The Environment—Niagara River source of Great Lakes pollution; the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn)—Fitness and Amateur Sport—Ottawa *Citizen* indoor games—Alleged payments to participating athletes; the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Wright)—National Energy Program—Financial effect of proposed oil industry nationalization.

It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's Order Paper, namely, notices of motions, private bills and public bills.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is at this point that I would ask the House to agree to stand all items under the heading notices of motions. We have, however, a point of order which has been raised on several occasions by the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) and I think it would be consistent and a courtesy to him that prior to requesting hon. members to stand all items preceding order No. 43, we deal with the point of order raised by that hon. member. I want to do that with as little interference with the private members' hour as possible.

[*English*]

I hope I am consistent with the hon. member's views when I say that the point of order he raises relates to the matter of private members' public bills which have been accepted under our system called the draw and drawn on the basis of title. There are, I think, some 300 private members' public bills in the draw and something over 200 have no text or bill, if I may use that expression for the moment, and I will come back to that.

The question raised is whether or not the House can continually proceed by unanimous consent or by request of the government to stand private members' public bills when in fact no bill exists. That is the essence.

It is appropriate to remind hon. members that under this system the practice has been to permit hon. members to submit only the title and not the entire bill, therefore the Chair is in the peculiar position of attempting to proceed in a way, according to the bill of the House, that private members' bills can be given second reading, and at the same time try to deal with this fiction which exists, the very point raised by the hon. member for Vaudreuil, who points out that it is rather difficult to stand a bill if no bill exists.

I would indicate briefly that all other arguments and considerations having been reviewed, there still remains the simple and basic problem the hon. member raises: how can we stand a bill if no bill exists?

It is the conclusion of this occupant of the chair that we cannot do it. Accordingly, the objection raised by the hon. member is accepted.

It follows from this point on, with an exception I will mention in a moment, the House will not be asked to stand non-existent bills. Because of the practice of submitting titles for the draw, that kind of decision would place hon. members in a very difficult situation, particularly those whose titles have been brought to the attention of the House and therefore the Chair.

Out of courtesy and consideration for hon. members, there ought to be a period of time during which some adjustment can be made. Consequently, for the next 30 days, those hon. members who wish to submit the text of their bills through the Clerk of the House, will have their bills printed and those bills will follow the normal course and be attributed the normal rights to be printed, and dealt with in private members' hour. Those hon. member who do not see fit to pursue the drafting of their bills and to provide the House with a text will lose their position on the Order Paper.

That raises a question as to whether or not this in fact is the best expression of the will of the House. The responsibility of the Chair is simply to examine the facts and come to a conclusion. Hon. members may very well wish to find some better method of dealing with private members' bills and the fact of there being hundreds with no text. That is not a matter for the Chair to decide but one for the hon. members to review and decide for themselves.

The decision I am now making is not made alone, and I would want to express the view of other occupants of the chair and the Table to the effect that we understand quite well that this raises some difficulty for hon. members fortunate enough to have the titles of their intended bills brought before the House; however, the conclusion I have reached is that this is the business of hon. members to deal with as they see fit, and the Chair will co-operate in every way possible to assist the members in finding a satisfactory solution.

I will now deal with Standing Order 19. Standing Order 19(2) reads as follows:

Orders not proceeded with when called, upon the like request, may be allowed to stand retaining their precedence;

Therefore, one wonders whether or not this ruling goes against the will of the House as expressed in the Standing Orders. The only argument I can present to hon. members is that it is difficult enough for the Chair to apply the Standing Orders from time to time and to try to understand the will of members, but if we go past that and proceed on the assumption that the Chair is going to further the fiction referred to earlier, I think the Chair is in an impossible position. It is the opinion of the Chair that the hon. member for Vaudreuil is quite correct in his view that unless the text of a bill has been submitted to the Clerk it cannot continue to stand on the Order Paper. I said, as a convenience to hon. members the ruling will be put in abeyance for a period of 30 days to give hon. members an opportunity to reorganize their titles in such a fashion as to provide a text with them.