

is a valid one and should be asked in the question period. If hon. members think that we should pursue the question period seven minutes after it has expired, this can be done, but only by unanimous consent. I will inquire whether there is unanimity.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I respectfully suggest to the hon. members for Skeena and Timiskaming, who are seeking information that they are certainly entitled to obtain, that they raise the matter again when we reach the question period tomorrow.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, today being Thursday, is the hon. member for Peace River not going to ask what is the business of the House for the ensuing days?

Mr. Baldwin: I was, Mr. Speaker, but I wanted to make sure that all questions of privilege had been thoroughly exhausted. Can the government House leader indicate what will be the business for today, tomorrow, Monday and as far along into next week as his strong eyes can see?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, today, as was announced yesterday, we will begin with the amendment to the Senate and House of Commons Act, followed by the amendment to the Prime Minister's Residence Act. Following that I would call the agricultural bills, of which there are several, and then the Post Office Act. I should like to discuss further with my colleagues in what order I will call the various agricultural bills.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

● (3:40 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SENATE AND HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING MEMBERS' SESSIONAL AND EXPENSE ALLOWANCES, ETC.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council) moved that Bill C-242, to amend the Senate and House of Commons Act, the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act, and an act to make provisions for the retirement of members of the Senate, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the subject matter of this particular bill, and the issue surrounding it, have really been in the public domain since February 1970, when the committee on parliamentary salaries and expenses was

Senate and House of Commons Act

appointed, and remained very active until its report was completed on November 16, 1970. In introducing this measure, and before paying some attention to the details of the bill, I should like to make a few comments about the role of the Member of Parliament.

The government and members on both sides of the House have for some time been concerned about the ability of the Member of Parliament to perform his role. As a result of this concern and the concern expressed by members themselves, members' facilities have gradually been improved. Some members will recall a time not so long ago when office accommodation had to be shared between two Members of Parliament. This situation has gradually been changed under successive governments, and plans are being developed for further improvement in office accommodation.

Following the 1968 election the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) announced the creation of research facilities for Members of Parliament, with the result that research divisions were established for the first time and attached to each caucus. Recently, improvements have been made, slight but definite improvements, in secretarial facilities. These are among a number of steps that have been taken to assist members in the performance of their function as representatives of the people.

While there are some aspects of the Beaupré report which the government does not feel ready at this time to accept or to recommend to Parliament—for example, increases in salaries for office holders—it does fully support the analysis of the role of the Member of Parliament contained in that report.

Touching upon the role of the member and the facilities required to discharge the responsibilities undertaken by members, the Beaupré committee makes the following comment:

And yet, Members of Parliament, charged with the complicated and onerous responsibility of representing individual rights and interests as well as directing the affairs of the country are often deprived of even the most fundamental facilities requisite to the efficient performance of their duties, either because governments have not seen fit to make them available, or because of the strictures of the member's personal financial situation.

Then, in commenting upon the modern role of the Member of Parliament, the committee states:

It is our belief that the individual member is the most important link in the communication chain that joins government to the public it serves. The committee—

That is, the Beaupré committee—

—visualizes the role of the member as becoming more onerous, more complicated, more responsible and more time consuming. Consequently, it will become increasingly important that provisions be made that will permit him to respond quickly and adequately to the requirements of the people of Canada.

It seems to me it is not quite fair to demand of our Members of Parliament such a high degree of dedication to the public interest and then to fail to supply them with the necessary resources to help them discharge the tasks imposed upon them. Although the duties of a Member of Parliament cannot always be set down in a carefully drawn job description, these duties are never-