

As I said, I do not want to go through the precedents. They have been well put forward by the hon. member from Kingston. I do not need to repeat them.

The practice is very clear. Our Annotated Standing Orders are very clear. As a result the practices we have been using for the last five or six years which have demonstrated a very clear pattern are the practices that we need to continue in the future.

I would like to refer to the Lefebvre committee which was the committee that first started this process of having questions and comments. I was a member of that committee in 1983-84 when the practice was first introduced. Very shortly after we found that there was a habit developing in the House of not applying the questions and comments to the speeches made by the Prime Minister or the first speaker for the Opposition.

I mention that because following the Lefebvre committee very closely was the McGrath task force which made major recommendations in terms of changes and reforms to the House. I also served on that committee. As I recall—and I am going from memory and not from a document that proves my case—the McGrath task force did not in any way try to change that practice which was already emerging at that particular point.

I think we have precedent and practice. There have not been any changes recommended by either the McGrath task force or the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges, Procedure and Private Members' Business. It is very clear that we should continue with the practice we now have, that is if someone wishes that to happen they should ask for consent. Then the government, the Opposition or the individual member speaking, at that point has the option of whether or not to accept it. It is not, as I believe is the very clear practice of this House, to allow those questions and comments under the present rules.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further reply from the hon. member for Kamloops?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the case has been well put by my hon. colleagues. I ask however, as I pleaded in the latter part of my presentation, that you give some thought to equity, fairness and justice in the House, particularly as reflected in the Mother of Parliament where front-benchers and back-benchers are treated in a similar fashion. There are no privileges extended to

selected members of the House, but those same privileges are extended to all members.

Mr. Speaker: As I said a few minutes ago, it is a very interesting point the hon. member for Kamloops has raised. I have listened carefully to his comments. I also listened to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The argument put forward is such that I think it is appropriate to reserve on it. I shall try to return to the House with some guidance for the House at three o'clock.

I want to thank the hon. member for Kamloops for presenting an argument which was extremely clear and well enunciated. I thank other members for their interventions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RAILWAY ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Monday, February 12, consideration of the motion of Mr. Bouchard (Roberval) that Bill C-26, an act to amend the Railway Act (grain and flour subsidies), be read a second time and referred to a legislative committee; and the amendment of Ms. Clancy (p. 8227).

• (1150)

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in this debate today on Bill C-26 and to speak to some of the comments that have been made previously. The member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, a member of our caucus, has done an outstanding job on the debate on Bill C-26.

I would like to review some of the arguments that he has presented and talk about the impact that this legislation is to have on Atlantic Canada. It will compound the problems that exist in the fishing industry there, as well as add to all the problems that this government is causing for that region of the country.

Just before getting into my comments I want to survey some of the research I have done on this matter and to refer to some of the reading I have been able to do. I really wish to compliment again the member of our