

citation can tell that the procedure does take some minutes. A practice has been developed in this House of ringing the bells when the parade commences, thus giving warning to all members of this chamber, no matter where they happen to be, whether in the Confederation Building, the West Block or an office in this building. The ringing of the bells signifies that in a few minutes the proceedings of the House will take place. It gives each of us an opportunity to be present in the House to form part of the initial quorum and to represent our constituents in the manner we were elected to do.

There is no citation in Beauchesne's, or in the orders of the day, that I could find which deals with the issue of the ringing of the bells prior to the evening session. Having sat here in this chamber for the past few days, Madam Speaker, I have noted that the ringing of the bells has varied between something close to two minutes to as little as 21 seconds.

When the House rose at six o'clock this evening I looked at two clocks which are located in the chamber, one at the end of the chamber and one opposite from where I am standing. There was a one-minute difference between those two clocks. It is interesting to note that there is nothing in Beauchesne, Erskine May or in the precedents of this House which deals with the issue of which is the master clock. The Standing Order says that we shall recommence on Tuesday evening at eight o'clock. But how is a member to define eight o'clock? Is he to look at the clock at the end of this chamber, the clock on the side wall or a clock in the Confederation Building?

As you well know, Madam Speaker, the proceedings of the committees are an extension of this House, therefore, vital to our functions here. I have seen clocks at each end of the room where committee meetings are held which are as much as five minutes apart. Are we to commence a meeting scheduled for 3.30 in the afternoon by consulting one clock which reads 3.30 or another which reads 3.25? A member arrives at 3.30, according to one of the clocks in the room, but the proceedings have been under way—

Madam Speaker: I cannot say what I must say in English.

[*Translation*]

If the clocks did not agree and if the hon. member noticed it, he should have got to his feet at that time and brought the matter to the attention of the House. Then the situation could have been remedied. The House having been made aware of the situation, proceedings in the House could have started on the basis of the clock indicating the correct time. Finally, the right time is not a topic on which a question of privilege can be based.

[*English*]

Mr. Hawkes: I know that the clocks in the chamber are self-correcting. I believe you, Madam Speaker, are in charge of all of the facilities in each and every building which constitute Parliament. I believe there are many clocks in those buildings which are not self-correcting from a central point—

Madam Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member. At some point one must have a bit of fun. I believe there was a

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time in the middle ages when there was a clock man who went around and set all the clocks. Maybe we should have that service here.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hawkes: That is a solution which had not occurred to me, and it might be one worth considering. I think it is a point about which it is somewhat easier to see humour in rather than some other points. I would hate it if by the introduction of humour or a smile on my face I were to indicate to you that I do not believe that this is a serious long-term issue.

Drawing from my own experience, there are days when I am in my office in the Confederation Building at 2 p.m. At that time I am often so engrossed in the work that I do on behalf of my constituents that it comes as a shock to me when the bell rings. If it is necessary for one to be in the chamber at the commencement of the sitting day, and if one leaves his office immediately, one still arrives at a time when the business of the House has commenced. Perhaps I see this in somewhat of a different vein than you might expect, Madam Speaker. I see the absence of a warning bell ringing a sufficient length of time to alert me to come from wherever I may happen to be on the Hill as an obstruction. It is an obstruction which perhaps is in the same category as a barrier placed across the street. Those of us who are assigned offices in the Confederation Building by Your Honour sometimes run into traffic which impedes the form of transportation available to all of us. That delays our appearance in the House even further.

I think it is incumbent upon the House to have a set of Standing Orders which are fair to all of its members, no matter where his office is situated. As I look across the chamber I see some hon. members opposite who face the same kind—

● (2020)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I think I have the gist of the hon. member's question of privilege. I must tell the hon. member that there is nothing in the Standing Orders which obliges us to ring the bell. We do it as a form of assistance to members, to alert them that the House will begin its deliberations. How long should the bell ring? It has been a standing practice that at eight o'clock the bell rings until such time as the Chair sees a quorum. That seems to be a legitimate time. For instance, how am I to know that the hon. member for Calgary West might come into the House that night, and should I be waiting for him to come into the House? If the bells were ringing for a number of minutes, would it be helpful to the hon. member if, at that particular time, he happened to be shopping in one of the stores of the national capital? The bells would not ring over there. It is absolutely impossible to give that kind of warning. Hon. members are held responsible for coming into the House at the time that they want to come into the House, and they know very well at what time the House starts its proceedings, be it in the afternoon or in the evening. There really is no question of privilege in what the hon. member has been talking about since the beginning of