

Privilege—Mr. Robinson

Before we get on to those matters perhaps Hon. Members would co-operate with the Chair in allowing me to recognize the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray).

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I thought it would be helpful for the orderly dispatch of business, before we got on to the matters just mentioned by Your Honour, if I were allowed to ask the customary question as to what business the Government intends to present for the coming week. I would then ask the Chair to recognize the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) who has a short question about a specific Bill.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to proceed today with second reading debate on Bill C-54, an Act to amend the Criminal Code. Tomorrow will be an allotted day. If Bill C-54 is not finished today then on Monday we will proceed again with it to be followed up by Bill C-87, the customs harmonization Act.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the business of the House question. I would like to ask the Government House Leader to inform the House today, or at the very earliest opportunity, when he intends to introduce for second reading Bill C-30, an Act to amend the National Parks Act, which, as the Minister probably knows, has been languishing on the Order Paper since December 11 of last year. Can he give us an answer to that question?

● (1510)

Mr. Lewis: The House will know that we have recently debated at length the proposed Environmental Protection Act which is an important environmental matter. That is presently before committee. I appreciate that this is another environmental matter. We are attempting to balance the legislation that we put into committee, and we will proceed with that as soon as possible.

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PRIVILEGE

JUSTICE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL—VISIT BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO MILLHAVEN INSTITUTION

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General, I felt I should intervene this afternoon in connection with the question of privilege raised yesterday by the Hon.

Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) arising out of our committee's visit to Kingston, Ontario, earlier this week.

From having glanced at yesterday's *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that you intended to adjourn this matter to permit the majority of the members of the committee, who continued the work in Kingston until last evening, to make representations to you.

Hon. Members will know that the justice committee has embarked upon a major comprehensive review of sentencing, parole, and various other forms of conditional release and related aspects of Correctional Services Canada. As part of that review, we agreed to go to Kingston, Ontario. We spent Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week visiting various institutions in that region.

As part of our visits to Collins Bay, Millhaven, the federal women's prison, and Kingston Penitentiary, we met with a number of witnesses, inmates' committees, parole officers, wardens at the institutions, representatives of the various unions representing the correctional officers at the various institutions, the John Howard Society, the Elizabeth Fry Society, and many other groups during what was a very hectic schedule this week.

Before dealing with the particular matters raised by the Hon. Member for Burnaby, may I say at the outset that I recognize that it is fundamental to the successful operation of the committees of this place that testimony be as free and frank as possible. To the extent that is humanly possible, committees should be able to get at the truth of the matters they are trying to examine. That is the tradition of this House. I would suggest that it is a tradition given perhaps further meaning by the parliamentary reform that has taken place during the last couple of years.

As chairman of the committee, I have certainly endeavoured to ensure that that objective is reached, and that we obtain the type of candour from witnesses that we should expect. I can tell the House that I certainly encouraged that during all our meetings in Kingston. For example, I insisted on officials not being present at any of the meetings that we held with witnesses. All those meetings were *in camera*. They were private meetings, the proceedings of which will not be part of the reports of our work. That applied not only to inmate committees and unions, but also to wardens; the idea being to create an atmosphere in which all witnesses could testify in a free and uninhibited manner.

No one from the Minister's office, from Correctional Services Canada, from the National Parole Board, either in Ottawa, or in the Ontario region in Kingston, was present at those meetings. In addition, we made special arrangements to provide an opportunity for parole officers to meet separately from their managers. It was at this meeting that one of the heads claimed by the Member for Burnaby arose, and I will deal with that in a minute.