

Private Members' Business

order of business to be dealt with, either papers or Private Bills or Private Members' Public Bills, we then proceed. I object to that because it means that we are to keep filing our Private Bills, and if the luck of the week's draw happens to favour you, it is like winning one of the lotteries. That is not right.

Mr. Crosby: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, may I make a brief intervention with respect to the problems and questions raised by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West. I share his concern about the conduct of Private Members' Business. I know it is of concern to a number of Members and it bears some close examination.

I would like in passing to record a very simplistic suggestion which I think might relieve some of the concern of Members with respect to the notification of what is to transpire regarding Private Members' Business. In particular, may I put on the record a suggestion that could be considered at some subsequent point by the Chair and by the Officers of the House of Commons. We now receive in some cases notification of what are the projected items for Private Members' Business. In fact, I have in my hand a document that is dated April 21, 1983 that lists the items to be considered or projected to be considered today in Private Members' Business.

I would simply make the suggestion that once this projection of Private Members' Business is known, it be communicated as quickly as possible to all Members so at least they will know as quickly as possible what the projected business is. I realize that similar notification can be posted and so on, but that has proved not to be successful.

I would ask the Chair and Officers of the House to consider whether there might be some more effective method for notifying Members, and preferably as much in advance of the time for considering Private Members' Business as possible. In the normal operation of the new Standing Orders, Private Members' Business is considered on a Wednesday, so that such a notification should be given no later than the preceding Monday.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I agree wholeheartedly with the remarks made by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West. I do not know how these matters are chosen. Surely there is some kind of a system. But here we are dealing with Bills going right back to No. 22, and, we are now dealing with those in the 400s and the 600s. I do not know how this is dealt with.

For weeks the Hon. Member for Vaudreuil was requesting papers from us and Bills were not even considered. I have a hunch that part of this difficulty is because the Government refuses to follow precedent by calling a session each year. We should have had a session called in 1981. There should have been a new session in 1982. There should have been a new session in 1983. Instead of that, we are still in the same session.

I know what the Government is trying to do. It gypped Private Members out of two days a week for several weeks, because after the first 200 hours of Private Members' Business only two days a week are allowed. Now under the new rules we are still gypped out of at least one Private Members' hour with the three hours allowed on Wednesday, and for this week on

Friday. If the Government would follow precedent and start thinking about the country instead of itself, we would not have this difficulty. Many of these things would be taken care of.

The British House of Commons invariably starts a new session every October except when there is an election in the middle of the year. Invariably the Queen reads the Speech from the Throne. If the Government does not have its Bills finished, too bad. It is the Government's responsibility to get important legislation into the House in time for it to be finished. In the British House, if this important legislation is not finished, too bad. The House must start over again the next year. That is the way it should be.

We in Canada should follow this precedent by having one session a year, not one session that is now in its fourth year. Here is where the difficulties arise, and the responsibility for that rests entirely on the doorstep of the Prime Minister and the Government.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I draw to the attention of the House that we are at this time engaged in debate on something that I fail to understand. The Speaker asked if there was unanimous consent to hold all Bills prior to No. 454. I have agreed.

I understand the concerns of some Members and I share those concerns. Sometimes we are not consulted as to the order in which Private Members' Bills are to be called on days like today. But I do not want to take any more time from the Hon. Member whose Bill has been called. I agree, and I did not hear anyone disagree, that we should proceed with Bill C-454.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I hope you will hear my comments although they may not be entirely relevant to the discussion. Since you are listening to grievances regarding Private Members' Business, I thought perhaps I would take this opportunity to cite my grievance. I can leave it for the learned Officers at the Table to muse over and perhaps advise Your Honour.

I had a Private Member's Bill which was considered by the House last fall. The precise time last fall escapes me at the moment but it was late last fall. There was an agreement in the House that the subject matter of the Bill would be referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. It was referred but it has not yet been considered by the Committee. I have no control over that because I am not a Member of the Committee. It is a Private Member's Bill and has nothing to do with the policy of this Party. It is strictly my own personal opinion that is reflected in the Bill.

● (1220)

If the House agrees to discharge the Bill and I agree to have the order withdrawn on condition that the subject matter is referred to the Committee, then it becomes an order of the House and is referred to the Committee. If the Committee refuses to deal with it, however, where does that leave me?