

*Public Bills*

Before sitting down, I wish to say that in the United Kingdom there are other means for dealing with private members public bills. Members there can, of course, bring forward private members public bills which will not be balloted on but which will be simply exposed to public scrutiny, as is often the case here. In addition, there is what is known as the ten minute rule. Every Tuesday and Wednesday, any member who has given notice for at least one week before that date, may introduce a bill. If he has given the proper notice he may debate it for ten minutes after the question period. Any member who seeks to speak in opposition to it may also speak for ten minutes. The bill, therefore, is debated for a total of 20 minutes. If the bill appeals to hon. members, they either put the legislation through or make sure that it can be dealt with at a later stage if time permits. In other words, in addition to the balloted bills, two of these ten minute bills are available to the House each week.

Instead of our present system, there might be one under which we might limit the number of bills that are brought in so as to permit members who are given this opportunity to have the proposal which they feel is worth while brought forward, discussed and adopted. I must say that if this were to happen, Parliament would be given credit for trying to persuade the people of Canada that private members have some useful and effective role to play in this House. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because the events of the last two or three weeks in this country, and events that have taken place in the United States and elsewhere, have caused people, and particularly young people, to say, "Is democracy functioning as we think it functions and as we believe it ought to function?". I am not saying that what I propose is, by itself, the answer; but it would give this House and Parliament a meaningful opportunity to bring forward issues and decide on issues which private members think are important, and that would be done without in any sense infringing on the rights of the government. I think that would be one of the many things which would persuade people that the processes and instruments of democracy have an effective place in our lives.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Jerome:** Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Baldwin:** I should be delighted to.

**Mr. Jerome:** I wonder if the hon. member would address himself to this question. Instead of bringing a specific proposal of this sort before the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, does he not think, especially since the matter is further narrowed by the allusion to voting, that it would be better to empower that committee to deal at all times with all aspects of the rules instead of with this particular aspect?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The time of the hon. member for Peace River has expired. Does he have the unanimous consent of the House to answer?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

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**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, I should like nothing better than for the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization to be given terms of reference entitling it to deal with all aspects of the rules and for this reason: the first "attempt" we made at changing the rules two years ago was at the request of the government. It was to enable the government to expedite its business, and the result brought considerable loss, in my view, to the democratic process. It is high time that those rules were looked at which deal with the rights of private members. I would be delighted if this were done. However, my fear is, and I base it on experience in the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, that unless these general terms of reference are also clarified by requests to look at certain specific problems, it is likely that those things which concern the private members most may not be dealt with.

● (5:20 p.m.)

I am prepared to have the motion amended to provide that the committee be authorized to look at all aspects of the existing Standing Order, but with special reference to priority of certain items. If not, I am convinced that many members from both sides of the House will feel that those matters which are important will never be dealt with or discussed.

**Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to see this motion brought into this House by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) dealing with the subject of the private members' hour and handling of private members' public bills. I am sure all members of this House share with him a feeling of frustration with regard to the way the business in the private members' hour is handled. Too often we see bills talked out on the floor of this chamber which seem to have merit and which should perhaps have received a better fate.

I think when some younger members of this House first listen to the private members' hour they come to the decision that it serves no real purpose because when the government business is completed, they disappear from the chamber. They do not take part in the discussion during this hour. Nevertheless, over the years it has been an excellent opportunity for new members to get to their feet and find out what it is like to debate in this chamber while members talk to each other, pace back and forth, read their newspapers or disappear from the chamber.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Deachman:** That is a very unnerving situation for a young man entering this House. Up until that time the few people he is able to gather in his constituency to listen to his speeches, mostly his solid supporters and many of them pensioners, listen to his words avidly. They meet him at the door and shake his hand afterwards. They tell him they hope he will repeat that message when he gets to Ottawa. When he gets to Ottawa he faces a phalanx of empty chairs. Therefore, the private members' hour is an excellent opportunity for the young parliamentarian to rise to his feet to speak.