

My last item in this question of privilege deals with the way we proceed at 5 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and at 4 p.m. on Fridays. It is my understanding that the responsible minister is required to indicate the willingness of the government to allow a measure to retain its position on the order paper if that measure is not to be proceeded with at that time. In order to have that specific indication, it is essential that the measure be called.

My several interjections on this subject arise from the difficulty we experience in finding out precisely what business is to be brought before the House. With so much committee work, it is obviously impractical for each member to be present at all times and therefore ready at all times to debate a specific measure on which he or she has an interest. The government House leader is rarely in a position to determine precisely when debate on a government bill will terminate and, under these conditions, must maintain some flexibility as to the next item that he will call.

However, the calling of private members' business is an entirely different matter. A start is made at a specific hour. Our rules require that we follow the order as it appears on the order paper. The member, therefore, has a right to assume that the first item of business will be called unless there has been an indication from the government of a reason to allow the measure to stand. It is agreed that the House must retain flexibility; however, the rights of members to participate in subjects of interest to them must also be respected.

Mr. Speaker, I would request your comment, at your convenience, on the various points that I have raised so that a judgment can be made on whether a motion is necessary to attempt to bring some order to private members' business.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will, of course, take the matter the hon. member has been dealing with under advisement. However, I should say at once that there are two obvious comments. The first is that the government, as such, really has no particular control over the conduct of private members' business. An indication of consent or otherwise from the government as to the ability of a bill or any other measure to stand and retain its priority is no different from the indication of any other member of the House. Private members' business is exactly as it is described, an hour set aside in which it is the business of all members of the House to participate in those measures. The consent given at any time for a measure on the order paper under private members' business to retain its priority would be quite valid during that time with or without the consent of anybody on behalf of the ministry.

The second point is that the procedures which have been adopted are matters of convenience. They are a departure from the strict interpretation of the rules which would require calling, seriatim, at every private members' hour, all such items on the order paper. Initially, the very filing of private members' bills and their selection for consideration is a departure from the strict interpretation of the rules. Those departures are a matter of custom and are for the convenience of members so that we can operate with reasonable smoothness and not waste too much time on a number of technical interpretations of the rules. The

### *Dredging*

Chair can do nothing more than implement that kind of custom. If it turns out that this kind of custom is not universally accepted, the Chair will have no recourse except to go back to the technical arrangements that have been described by the hon. member.

It seems the Chair ought to let the matter stand, in the hope that the hon. member and others who are concerned about the problem might work it out internally by speaking to the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and, if necessary, to the other House leaders in order to ensure that there is understanding as to how the business ought to operate.

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[Translation]

### SOCIAL SECURITY

#### TABLING OF COMMUNIQUÉ FROM CONFERENCE OF FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MINISTERS

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of National Health and Welfare, I am tabling in both official languages two copies of the communiqué from the federal-provincial conference of welfare ministers.

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[English]

### PUBLIC WORKS

#### DREDGING CONTRACTS—STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT POSITION IN VIEW OF PROSECUTIONS UNDERTAKEN

**Hon. C. M. Drury (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to a question asked in the House by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) earlier this week, I stated that I would make an announcement on the subject of dredging on Thursday or Friday. I am now in a position to make that statement. Let me begin by saying that we are faced with a situation in which the individual companies making up practically the whole of the dredging industry are facing prosecution in the criminal courts with respect to dredging contracts. We are also faced with a situation where dredging must proceed or continue in order to ensure continued public safety and to avoid major economic disruptions.

Let me first advise the House of the measures the government intends to take immediately in order to protect the public interest in future dredging contracts. I will discuss existing dredging contracts later.

● (1210)

First of all, action has been taken to strengthen the terms and conditions in the new contracts by requiring the contractor to agree to full disclosure of all factors on which his bid is made, and the nature and extent of any communication relating to the work or the cost of the work between the contractor and any other person. This requirement will provide the Crown with additional information for use in determining the validity of the bids. An interdepartmental committee under the chairmanship of Public Works will analyse and review bids. This commit-