

would be the ideal solution. Only the adoption of a Standing Order could settle this issue once and for all, and I suggest to the House such a Standing Order is sorely needed.

I shall, as has been suggested, be consulting with the three House Leaders with a view to regulating this very important procedural question. For the time being, pending an agreement to change the practice or until I receive other instructions from the House, I shall continue to follow recent precedents. Dilatory motions will be deemed to have lapsed at the ordinary hour of adjournment if not disposed for earlier. In the case of substantive questions, if not disposed of before the ordinary hour of adjournment, the sitting and the bells will be suspended until 9 a.m. on the following sitting day, unless the Chair is notified of a specific intervening hour at which the Whips intend that the vote should take place.

I am not suggesting that either of these practices provides a satisfactory answer to the problem. Without a limit on the bells, we shall continuously be facing a potential procedural dilemma.

[*Translation*]

The House is master of its own procedure. The authority of the Chair comes from the House. In areas of uncertainty, the Chair can only do its best to interpret the will of the House and protect the rights of its Members. Without the support of the House, the Chair is powerless. I think we should learn from recent experience. The problems we face have been exposed. I would like to thank Hon. Members for their contribution to this discussion. It has been instructive for the Chair and I hope for all Hon. Members.

Above all, I believe it has been instructive for this great institution which we all cherish. The Chair stands ready to co-operate with the House in any attempt to regulate this difficult and pressing problem. The House should, however, be aware of the Speaker's position. He should not be placed in a situation where he is confronted with conflicting duties.

[*English*]

Until the House comes to grips with this problem, it will remain a constant threat to the efficiency of the House and the security of the Chair. I suggest the credibility of the parliamentary institution is at stake. I believe we have the duty to protect it.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of arguing the issue again since in your comments today, you already referred to the views expressed previously by the Parliamentary House Leaders. However, considering recent events and the comments of the Chair in this respect, I feel it is my duty, as Leader of the Government in the House, to say very briefly what my reactions were. My first reaction was extremely positive, with respect to the Chair intervening, because you have shown a very real concern for seeing this institution operate in a normal

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way, and I believe that in the circumstances, the House can hardly have any reservations about the intentions of the Chair, which were to make a contribution while respecting the will of the House towards making it possible for Parliament to be respected and operate in a normal way.

The Chair also referred, very appropriately, to recent, sometimes appalling, events which I would nevertheless like to touch on very briefly to justify your action as well as the suggestion I would like to make to the Chair. The latest incident . . . and there have been three during the last two weeks, Mr. Speaker, in which the public, which was unfortunately unable to intervene, witnessed a constant ringing of the division bells. The latest incident was yesterday. I think it is shocking, because the division bells were used to achieve two negative and entirely unacceptable objectives. The first was to prevent Parliament from sitting, which is intolerable when we consider the number of people to serve and the volume of legislation before the House, and the second, to prevent one of the parties to a contract from meeting its obligations. In my view, the latter is just as shocking and intolerable.

The House will recall that last June, we had a Bill in which the Government asked for authority to borrow a certain sum of money. The Government negotiated with the Official Opposition and made a deal. An agreement was reached. The deal was: "We are going to cut the amount but you will let us ask Parliament for the difference, with a three-day debate, subject to certain conditions". We met these conditions, Mr. Speaker. The conditions were very straightforward. They were laid down in a special Standing Order of the House, so this was being taken very seriously, and the purpose of the Standing Order was to prevent the Government from losing its part of the deal in a new session, and under the Standing Order we were only obliged to introduce a Bill by the end of March. Therefore, entirely legitimately, we gave notice as required under the Standing Order. We advised the Official Opposition of our intention to act on this agreement, and we made it abundantly clear that we wanted to request, on short notice, a borrowing authority of \$4 billion, according to the Bill appearing on the Order Paper. We even informed the Official Opposition that we were ready. I made a solemn commitment on behalf of the Government—it is on the record—yesterday, that we were prepared to subtract the \$4 billion from another Bill that is before the House, so that the Opposition would not lose anything, and the Government was not trying to get more out of the deal made with the Official Opposition than it had obtained when the Opposition gave its word that the Government, if it did so within a certain period, could have a three-day debate; \$4 billion in order to meet its obligations, pay income tax refunds to Canadians, and so forth. So where do the division bells come in? The Conservative Party used the bells to prevent the Government from acting on the rights it had under this agreement with the Opposition, although the Government held up its side of the agreement. It is absolutely