

Government Orders

hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, on questions and comments.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize there was a question in the comments made by my hon. friend, the Government Whip, but if our common objective is to clarify the bill—and I believe the amendment does exactly that—I have no further comments. I think everything is quite clear. All we wanted to do is eliminate any interpretations that might hamper the legal process. In other words, if a member got wind of an investigation into his administration or budget, he could ask the board for an opinion, which would have had the effect of delaying if not altogether preventing the investigation. I think that possibility has now been eliminated from the bill and that the Senate did a good job. They are to be commended and deserve our thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): After consulting the Standing Orders, I must admit that the objection raised by the hon. member for Churchill is in order, since according to Standing Order 43, during the period for questions and comments members may not move a motion to extend the sitting hours of the House.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, during the remarks of the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, there was an offer on his behalf, as the Liberal member of the board, to take care of the concerns of the member for Churchill. I have since heard the offer from the chief government Whip, who is also a member of the board, indicating the government's support to take care of those concerns at the Board of Internal Economy.

I would like to ask the House Leader of the New Democratic Party whether he, as the New Democratic representative on the same board, would agree to attend to these concerns at the board.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reply on a point of order on two points. First of all, I think it indicates, on behalf of the government a recognition that clarification is required and a suggestion perhaps that this might be an appropriate way to deal with this issue raised by my hon. friend from Churchill. I want to say, with all

sincerity, that I would enjoy discussing this as a way of enabling this motion to proceed.

On another point, however, I want to say that my offer still stands from earlier regarding the important agricultural bill. If the government wants to introduce that and say this is the item of business for this afternoon, and we want to see this completed as the only item of business, we will ensure that takes place and that the bill will be passed today.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the hon. member is agreeing to let a decision be taken on Bill C-79 at this time. There are seven minutes which allow us to call Bill C-98. I would then ask for unanimous consent to allow us to continue through the lunch hour to deal with Bill C-98, the agricultural bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I understood that the hon. member for Kamloops suggested that members interested in this matter might get together for a discussion.

I have plenty of time this afternoon to discuss my proposal for using the Board of Internal Economy to meet the concerns of the hon. member for Churchill. If this suits hon. members, I am prepared to meet them to discuss the matter. I hope the outcome will be satisfactory.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier and his offer that he would be prepared to make time available later today to discuss this and see if we can come to a satisfactory resolution. I would be more than pleased to do the same and make myself available. I think a gesture of good faith that the government is serious in this initiative would be to introduce the agricultural bill at three o'clock when we begin this afternoon.

However, I want to make perfectly clear that if the government tries to jam through the changes to the Standing Orders at three o'clock, I would have to consider this offer to be made not necessarily in good faith.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, in response to the government's suggestion, we would be prepared to embark on consideration of the agricultural bill immediately and we would be prepared to sit through lunch in order to discuss it. I want to indicate our co-operation on that point. We think it is an important bill and ought to be disposed of promptly.