

tion in being able to make them, to get an idea into print. Maybe it gets shown over the television, too; the people out there know what we are proposing, and to what those people over there are saying no. I think there's value in that. In the last few days, using what few devices there are, we have been pressing the case for equal rights for women. We haven't won any battles on the floor of the House this week but we have asserted the principle of our position and I think it has been good.

As I say, I have no hope that in the atmosphere of the House, where we are just wondering on what date the election will take place, we will be making any major changes in the rules.

**An hon. Member:** What's your guess?

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** What is my prediction? June 26. If I am out a bit, it will be only by a week, so don't call me a false prophet.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is good we have had this discussion. I think it reflects the experience of members in this parliament, namely, that we have not done either job well—we have not handled the government's business with an eye to the best use of time and we haven't given recognition to the proper rights of private members. I think we should have the wit and the wisdom very early in the next parliament to sort out this whole business.

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

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** As vice-chairman of the committee on procedure for the second session I want to say, briefly, that although discussion of this question may be of value to hon. members, only the President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) can decide to bring forward matters and refer them to the committee. He has not done this for two sessions. I am afraid representations should be addressed not only to the Chair but to the President of Privy Council urging him to let go and refer some of these problems to the committee so that it can act and make references back to the House so that a lot of these difficulties can be eliminated.

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to thank all hon. members for their enlightening observations on a very difficult subject. The right hon. member made reference to this in the House a few days ago. At that time I indicated what I think, what has been expressed again here today by the right hon. member and by others who have contributed, that there are severe constraints on the operation of this rule as there are constraints on the operation of any other rule.

● (1622)

Indeed, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) set aside one of these motions the other day for a very important reason, and that is that often when a motion is put forward, no matter how meritorious it may seem, members may take an objection in principle to being asked, because if the solution seems to be that the matter be voted upon, or

*Privilege—Mr. Alkenbrack*

carried without debate, that in itself is often an affront to members of the House of Commons who say that on important subjects they were not elected to this House to pass motions in a wooden way without debate.

The rule has very severe limitations on it, because if the solution proposed is that motions be passed without debate, that is not very satisfactory. If it is because it is worthwhile they are debated, then that obviously is not satisfactory either because there is no time and, therefore, the rule is now being used primarily as a replacement for a grievance procedure which is non-existent. Again, I say that perhaps the most important note was that from the hon. member for Edmonton West, that is, if changes in this and other procedures are going to be made, it will have to be a matter for study and recommendation by the procedure committee.

It is not a matter for the Chair and it is not a matter of privilege in its basic form, but it certainly is an admonition and a hope that the procedures committee might examine this at the earliest possible moment. I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was very realistic in saying that the hope it might be done between now and a general election is very slim indeed, but perhaps his prediction may be right for the date and wrong for the calendar year, in which case there will be lots of time to get it through.

MR. ALKENBRACK—EXTENSION OF ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege which has a relationship to the important point of privilege raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and other hon. members of the House, including the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark). It is just of a little different nature.

In my 16 years as a member of this House this is the first complaint, sir, of this nature, that I have ever made to you, or any other able or respected occupant of the chair, and I am confident that it will be given your able consideration. It arises because of my inability to ask an important question in the interests of 120 petitioning constituents that I tried to ask twice last week, and again today.

Sir, there is nothing more important than the oral question period in the operations of this House and the rights of members and their constituents. The following is my point of privilege, with my constant respect for the Chair.

The privileges of all backbench members are lately very much limited and denied by too protracted questions and unreasonably long answers permitted in this House, resulting in many members being precluded from placing important questions before you. If these intolerable conditions continue, then as a reasonable concession to the privileges of all backbench members, I ask the Chair to consider the extension of the oral question period in order that important problems of our constituents might be made known to this House, and to the government, and or failing that, that there be strict