

House of Commons Procedures

about the fact that in the course of the afternoon sittings, due to the length of the time taken on routine proceedings and the question period, and taking into account the private Members hour, there is very little opportunity left for the consideration of Government business? Is the hon. Member not concerned about this?

Mr. Barnett: The answer to that question is that the President of the Privy Council is proposing certain other action so as to make more time available for Government business in the afternoon. I realize we have not dealt with these proposals as yet. I am not maintaining for a moment that there have not been occasions during the last session or so when, between 2.30 and 6 p.m. the time available for the dispatch of Government business was much less than I think should have been available. I do not think this is the moment at which to discuss just how and why such a situation has arisen. I suppose each of us would have his interpretation of what has happened. Each of us could produce his own justification for actions he has taken as an individual Member which have helped to bring these circumstances about. But as I read this proposal it is that private Members business should be taken up in one of the hours which have been devoted in the past to the supper recess. Having regard to all the other proposals to speed up the dispatch of Government business which are being put forward, I do not see why this should be necessary, and I note that no argument has been put forward to explain why the House, having spent from six o'clock to seven o'clock on private Members business, should turn immediately to the consideration of Government business.

Other hon. Members have referred to the problems which the staff of the House will face. I listened with interest to a most eloquent speech on this subject by the hon. Member for Pontiac-Témiscamingue. So far, no spokesman for the Government has told the committee what practical measures are being proposed in an attempt to deal with this problem. I think we should have a statement from someone speaking on behalf of the Internal Economy Commission telling us just what the authorities have in mind in this regard. The President of the Privy Council very often acts as unofficial spokesman for the Commission in this House and I think we are entitled to have an assurance from him on this point. Possibly it is very well

[Mr. McIlraith.]

for us to subject ourselves to the indignities which are proposed in this motion, but it is quite another matter for us to foist a situation of this kind on those who are employed in the service of the House. I hope this aspect of the matter will be clarified or that there may be some modification of the proposal as it now stands before we end discussion on this particular part of the resolution before us.

Mr. Knowles: In line with the concluding suggestion just made by my hon. friend from Comox-Alberni may I put forward an amendment which obviously represents a compromise. It was our view, and it still is, that it is a mistake to add these two hours between six and eight. We think it is unfair to the Members of this House, unfair to the staff and unfair to the press. We believe it will not gain the time which the Government thinks will be gained. Our amendment which would have restored the two hour recess between six and eight o'clock and the one and a half hour recess on Friday has been defeated, so it would not be in order to move that proposition again. However, I should like to suggest to the Government that it go this far—that it provide for an hour's recess between seven and eight on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.

It will be obvious that what I am offering is a compromise, giving more than we are asking. It accepts the proposition that we should sit straight through on Fridays. But I would urge, without repeating the arguments that have been made by other members of this group, that for this trial period the whole proposition the Government wants might work better if it would consider letting us have that one hour break on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Therefore I move:

• (8:30 p.m.)

That subparagraph (1) of the proposed Standing Order 6 be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and by adding immediately thereafter the following words: "provided, however, that at seven o'clock p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays Mr. Speaker shall leave the Chair until eight o'clock p.m."

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Chairman, the amendment offered is an attempt to introduce something that I suppose superficially must appear to be attractive to many Members, but I think that the proposition that the House should sit continuously throughout the afternoon and evening is one that is in common usage in many of the jurisdictions of the world and seems to work satisfactorily. We have made a compromise on all of these rule proposals that I think is very far reaching