

*Government Orders*

without hearing grievances or resort to a hypothetical example.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Although the Chair has no intention of dealing with hypothetical matters—that is not the role of the Speaker—and should not lay the rules governing House proceedings, the Chair does take seriously any claim that the fundamental rights of this House have been or could be misrepresented. So, the Chair has examined the proposal in question and its potential effect on the supply process.

[*English*]

The purpose of our existing Standing Order 81(8) is to establish for any calendar year three supply periods ending December 10, March 26 and June 30 in which different aspects of the business of supply are considered. In the proposed amendment, Standing Order 81(8)(a), this purpose remains unchanged, but the date of the June supply period is altered to June 23. The number of allotted days is reduced from 25 to 20, proportionately, within each period. Proposed new sections 8(b) and 8(c) are also added to the Standing Order. Section 8(b) introduces the concept that should the House not sit on days designated as sitting days in the Standing Orders, then the total number of allotted days in that supply period would be reduced proportionately. New Section 8(c) provides that should the House sit more than the prescribed number of days, extra allotted days would be added, again proportionately.

Viewed in context, it is very difficult to see these changes as any more than an adjustment to the supply process. Arguably, rather than divorcing the allotted days from the supply period, the proposed changes might make them a more integral part of that process by adding a condition which makes them more responsive to the actual process. In the past, when the House did not sit for extended periods during a supply cycle, as, for example, when a new session of Parliament opened in the middle of a supply period, adjustments to the number allotted days were subject to negotiation and were usually achieved through special orders of the House. Such special orders were passed in 1971, 1974, 1980 and 1989.

[*Translation*]

It seems that the proposed changes, by establishing a set formula to determine how such adjustments are to be made, would add an element of certainty in what has been, admittedly, an ad hoc process.

[*English*]

In this way it appears to the Chair that rather than detracting from the right of members to air grievances before supply, it might be argued that the proposed changes secure that right. Accordingly, the Chair cannot find that particular aspect of the point of order raised by the hon. member for Kamloops is well taken.

I turn now to that aspect of the hon. member's point of order which dealt with proposed Standing Order 56.1. This would be a completely new addition to the rules of the House. It provides that if, at any time during a sitting of the House, unanimous consent is denied for the presentation of a routine motion, then a minister of the Crown may request during Routine Proceedings that the Speaker put the motion. If 25 or more members rise to oppose the motion, it shall be deemed withdrawn otherwise it shall be deemed adopted.

The routine motions to which this new process applies are delineated in paragraph (b). They are those motions made upon Routine Proceedings, which may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House; the maintenance of its authority; the management of its business; the arrangements of its proceedings; the establishing of the powers of its committees; the correctness of its records, or the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

Accordingly, there is a very limited range of motions to which this proposed process can apply.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Kamloops claims that the proposal would "override unanimous consent". In his opinion, that clause "proposes to change our notion of unanimous consent and to enable the rules of procedure and operations of the House to be changed by an agent of the Crown unless 25 members of the House object." He also pointed out that the proposal would establish "two classes of members, those who by virtue of being ministers of the Crown can obtain unanimous consent as long as 25 members do not object, and those ordinary