

*Extension of Hours*

holidays, and except on the days when we deal with private members' business. Normally, we do this on Wednesdays, but we have already had discussions on this subject, and while no decision has yet been reached, it seems that we may yet agree to switch the proceedings of Thursdays and Wednesdays for the next two weeks, so that all Hon. Members may leave as early as possible the day before St. John the Baptist Day and Canada Day. I hope that such an agreement can be reached later today or in the next few days.

In the meantime, I could only suggest that our sitting hours be extended every day except on private members' days and this coming Friday, the only one remaining, and we have already informed the Opposition House leaders of the business we would like to deal with on that day.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Hon. Members will manage to tone down their animosity towards a number of bills and ensure that our parliamentary reform is success. It is the first time in our history that this type of motion is introduced to extend the sittings hours on seven days, for all practical purposes, which means that we are simply asking Parliament to give us 35 additional hours. It is the first time that we move such a motion, and it would be unfortunate if Members were to oppose it simply to show that they object to some piece of legislation or to try to score political points. Of course, Members are entitled to debate the motion as provided under Standing Order 9. My motion can be debated for two hours, and I do not intend to go on much longer so that as many Members as possible can express their views, but I can understand that some may not agree with the hours I have suggested.

However, I want to point out that I had the courtesy to consult beforehand the House leaders of the Parties opposite well before their caucus meetings this morning, but we could not come to an agreement, which is why I now have to introduce this motion. I find it quite normal that the motion should now be debated for a maximum of two hours provided under our rules and that it then be voted on. Those are the rules of the game, but what I would not like to see, however, would be a filibuster such as my friend the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) and House leader of the New Democratic Party had in mind when he suggested that we proceed with the orders of the day. I find it rather difficult to understand why he is doing that. He was a member of the committee on parliamentary reform. Indeed he was one of those who suggested that, in exchange for guaranteeing two summer months to Hon. Members who want to be in their ridings, we would allow the House to sit longer hours during the last two weeks of June. He was one of the strong advocates of that reform, and now he is trying to prevent debate on the motion, he does not want longer hours until the end of June. I wish he would explain his position clearly. If he tells me that it is because he objects to a particular Bill, I can only answer that this is not the time to raise the issue. I think it would be

unfair to the Canadian people to prevent Parliament from sitting longer hours until the end of the month simply because the honourable gentleman does not fancy a piece of legislation.

I think that instead of cawing like crows, his colleagues should endorse our motion and commend us for enabling Parliament to sit longer hours to debate as many Bills as possible.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we are proposing that Members opposite have more opportunities for debate and, to my mind, it is ridiculous for a Member to try to thwart us simply because he is against a legislative measure. That flies in the face of our democratic system. I agree that he does not have to support all Government measures. Their duty is to debate in the House and vote against Government Bills, certainly not to bring Parliament to a standstill and particularly not to undermine our credibility as we try to reform Parliament. I deplore that attitude and I hope the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain will reconsider his position and realize that he ought not to jeopardize our parliamentary reform because some of his colleagues do not agree with a Government measure.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am proposing that we sit 35 extra hours from now until the end of the month, and there is a possibility that we might agree to negotiate with the opposition parties to reduce those hours should we dispose more rapidly of a series of legislative measures on which the House has already begun debate and with which the Government would be satisfied. It is quite reasonable to expect that between now and the end of June we might reach agreement on a series of Bills acceptable to both sides of the House, and perhaps that might enable the House to adjourn earlier than 11 p.m. on those days when we propose an extension of the sittings. That is a possibility. I want to state clearly to our colleagues opposite that we on this side are prepared to renegotiate, but unless we reach an agreement today—keeping in mind that under the Standing Orders of the House this motion must be disposed of in one day, the tenth sitting day before June 30—I do not have any choice but to introduce a motion indicating specific and definite hours. Still, we will remain flexible until the end of June, assuming of course that the Opposition is reasonable.

• (1520)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):** Questions and comments? Debate.

**Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to point out that when I rose to my feet after the Government House Leader announced the motion, I wanted to be sure to get on to debate and not have the motion go through as quickly as the Government wants all its Bills to go through—without any debate whatsoever—so I was willing to relinquish the floor to the Government House Leader so he might put the Government's position forward.