

precedent in our long history of parliamentary traditions. Under House reform, Private Members' Bills, as indicated by this Bill, now have a very healthy chance at passage. This is a welcome situation and I applaud the Government for its interest and efforts to assist Private Members.

Portions of the committee's hearings were a little contentious and emotional but I thank all Members for their co-operation and diligence in the study of this Bill. Over 100 witnesses were heard and over 100 written briefs presented. I want to thank the Library of Parliament research staff for their able assistance throughout our deliberations. Additionally, the assistance of the office of the Law Clerk and the Public Bills office was greatly appreciated.

All committee members and support staff have put in exhaustive and demanding hours on the study of this Bill. I am proud to present it to you and the House today as the fruits of our labour.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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POINT OF ORDER

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21—TIME LIMITATION

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, my point of order relates to the period set aside in our daily agenda for statements and, in particular, to what happened this afternoon.

Members will recall that under Standing Order 21 they may be recognized under the provisions of Standing Order 19(4) to make a statement for not more than one minute. We have set aside 15 minutes in our daily proceedings for that exercise. There is a growing trend, which is perhaps exemplified by behaviour in today's statement period, of exceeding that time. I bring to your attention the fact that eight opposition Members made statements to the House and seven of them exceeded the one minute length. In fact, two of them exceeded one minute and 20 seconds, which is really quite long. On the government side, however, only one Member exceeded the time limit and some were down to as low as 41 seconds.

I think that the pattern of recognizing government Members and opposition Members alternately is probably a good one given our traditions. However, I suggest that either we have to initiate some self-discipline to keep it under one minute or, if opposition Members are going to consistently exceed the time limit, then fewer of their Members should be recognized. If government Members stay disciplined we should not be penalized by being denied the opportunity to make our statements simply because opposition Members exceed the time limits and eat into the time ordinarily available for government Members.

Point of Order—Mr. Hawkes

Alternatively, we might want to begin to recognize Members according to the number of Members in the House of Commons from each Party. That would result in three-quarters of the time going to the government side and one-quarter to the Opposition.

I hope you will take this under due consideration. Perhaps Members opposite would like to reflect upon it. However, I think the situation is such that Members on this side would have to fight to maintain the rule of 60 seconds. It is an important issue with respect to government Members having access to that statement period.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the Parliamentary Secretary for nit-picking. We do not have one minute timers built into our bodies. When we make our statements we share with the Chair the expectation that someone at the Clerks' Table will tell us when our time is up. That has been the practice over the last three and a half years. What the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has said is to me a vote of non-confidence in the ability of the Chair or the Table to maintain the time constraints.

I can understand why the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary had his time-clock today. I saw him keeping time and doing the work of one of our clerks.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): He has to keep busy somehow.

Mr. Gauthier: Yes, but I really do not see why he would be nit-picking to the extreme of complaining about this to the Speaker of the House who has responsibility for everything concerning those statements. I think it is wrong for him to raise it at this time. If he has nothing else to do, I recommend that he get up and make a statement some time as to what he feels is important in his constituency. Maybe we can listen to him and if he has a good point we will give him an extra five seconds.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to rise for a moment to react to this rather trivial point raised by the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Winegard: It is not trivial.

• (1510)

Mr. Riis: We do have a procedure to deal with these, if you like, nit-picking issues. House Leaders meet regularly and the board meets regularly. There are ongoing discussions. I do not consider this a normal point of order but, rather, a challenge to the Chair.

The Parliamentary Secretary is saying that the Speaker has been unable to determine the appropriate length of statements and that the Speaker ought not to have the right, on occasion, not to see the clock. It has been a long-standing practice of this House that on occasion, whether in a speech or some other intervention by an Hon. Member, the Speaker decides whether