

House of Commons Procedures

● (4:40 p.m.)

Mr. Peters: I am not sure how to do it, Mr. Chairman, but I should like to delete the whole of the section. Perhaps all I have to do is move a motion that we delete the whole section. I am one of those who believe that we should not go back to barbaric conditions of giving up our lunch or dinner hours. The supper hour means more in Canada perhaps than it does in a number of other countries. I ask the Government to reconsider this provision. A limit of 36 days has already been established for estimates and the House is going to put on a further limit. I suggest the Government reconsider the idea of establishing a regular supper hour as we have it in the Standing Order. The Standing Order indicates the House shall not sit between six and eight. The amendment provides, by inference, that we shall not adjourn for a supper hour.

There is no question about it, if a Member of Parliament is doing his job he starts at nine o'clock in the morning with committees and attends the House in the afternoon. He should be entitled, therefore, to some reasonable period for a supper hour. The lunch hour in Canada, in my opinion, is not as important as the supper hour. The dinner hour may be celebrated at a different time in other countries than it is in Canada. I believe we are being silly, Mr. Chairman. I believe we are being silly enough that I will try to bring this to the attention of the House and the country in a very vocal way in the next few weeks by being more obnoxious than I have been in the past. I suggest, Mr. Chairman, that is no idle threat and I do not believe I will have any disagreement on that.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Peters: Hon. Members can say "Shame" all they like. I think we are adults in this country. Let us discuss for a moment what has happened over a period of time. We have had in the opposition one of the best lawyers that have been around Parliament for a long time, in the form of our previous legal counsel, who is now in another place. Many Members of the House of Commons developed good ideas for introducing new legislation during Private Members hour, through motions, through bills and other procedures that were seldom ever used. Now, the operation of this House has been such, and I will be prepared to talk about that during this debate, that it has not been able to cope with this problem.

[The Chairman.]

When I first came here there were probably half a dozen major bills in the names of private Members. Now, there are a hundred or more, some of which are worth while. It is true also that each Member has spent a great deal of time with the various departments and given a great deal of thought to the subject matter of these bills. What has the Government said? It has really said: We hate the idea of having to sit here and have our Government Members stand up and talk out these very good ideas. Let us refer to one of those good ideas. I have seen most of the influential Liberals, as well as some Conservatives, at a recent meeting with regard to the abolition of capital punishment. These are the same Members who loved the capital punishment bill to death for a number of years. They loved it to death because the Government of the day did not have the guts to do anything about it. They have no guts yet. They are going to do something about it in a roundabout way. What are they going to do?

They have decided this is a rather dangerous thing. They are going to have private Members hour. We are going to gain therefore body is going to be here. Let us waive the right of a quorum; let us waive the right of any press coverage that a private Member might get, and not do anything for the private Member. The Government will not even have to face a vote during that period if anybody gets up and objects to it. Surely, as adults we can come up with a better system than that. Really, we are going to extend the hours by only one hour because the Government has not been able to cope with private Members hour. We are going to gain therefore only one hour. Does the House Leader honestly think he is going to get away with this? I do not know what vehicle we will use. I am not sure we are going to find one right away, but I am sure we will find one. I am sure also, because I have seen it happen that if the Leader of the Opposition in this House finds we have a good vehicle and use it two or three times he will throw his weight behind it. If I do not hit it the first time I will get it the second.

Surely, we can arrive at a better solution of the problem that has developed in the last few years with regard to private Members hour. There will not be anybody here during the supper hour, there will not be anybody in the press gallery, so that an individual can make a speech for his riding back home. In the consumer credit field alone,