

that he will respect my views since I must find some way to apply them.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, simply to state our position on the record, as have the other Parties, I agree that the Chair has simply enforced the rules. What has happened has been unfortunate. I as one Member tried to undo a misunderstanding, but I think it is important for the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) to realize that we on this side of the House do not attempt to enforce Party discipline during Private Members' Hour. We will familiarize Members with what the Government position is, but we cannot interfere with the rights of any private Member. One Member has chosen to exercise his rights in a way which I regret, but he has that right and the Chair has enforced that right. That is all there is to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I think that we should terminate this discussion. Leaving aside any references to Parties whatsoever, it is certainly the responsibility of the Chair to recognize and to enforce individual Member's rights in the House. That is one of the primary functions of the Chair. One Hon. Member refused unanimous consent. I ask the House to understand that there is nothing that can be done if unanimous consent is refused by an Hon. Member. That terminates the issue, and I ask Hon. Members to move on to the next item of business.

Mr. Sargeant: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one further point. When you called the question, you correctly pointed out that you said it in French. The translator, at least over the ear plug that I have, said Bill C-684. I did not know that she was talking about the same Bill.

An Hon. Member: That is not true.

Mr. Sargeant: It is true if you listen to the corrections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): That issue is very readily resolvable. It is not an issue of essence. Certainly the recordings of the House of Commons will bear out the Hon. Member or will bear out the Chair. Perhaps I made a mistake, but even if I did, I would not regard that as an essential matter. I would say that the will of the House must proceed despite a mispronunciation, and I am satisfied to say that as far as I know, I did not misread it either in English or in French.

Shall all orders listed under Private Members' Public Bills preceding order No. 424 be allowed to stand by unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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PUBLIC PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT

MEASURE RESPECTING PROCEDURE ON PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin) moved that Bill C-642, an Act respecting the presentation of petitions to Parliament, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Petitions to Parliament

He said: Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in presenting this Bill to the House for debate today. The presentation of petitions has gained some notoriety in the last week or so, but petitions are a very significant method by which ordinary citizens of the country who do not have the opportunity that I have to speak in the House of Commons can bring to the attention of this institution through their signature a grievance that they may have or a suggestion as to how something may be changed so that their lives may be bettered.

The practice of putting petitions to a legislative body is not new. It has been happening for hundreds of years. We have brought from the mother Parliament in Great Britain to this institution the practice of presenting petitions to Parliament. From the beginning, the presentation of petitions was allowed by Parliament as a means for ordinary citizens to bring their grievance to the attention of the House of Commons. The practice have been used over, and it is only in recent years that nothing has happened to petitions. Petitions are brought to the House by the Member of Parliament, are read to the Speaker and the Clerk who then deal with those petitions, and the next day they are either found to be in order or not. They then disappear in a room somewhere in the House of Commons. That is not entirely the case, but it is pretty close.

I would like to indicate to the Chair and the Members of the House of Commons that in Great Britain, the procedure followed is slightly different and, I think, better than the procedure we have adopted in Canada. Public petitions were first adopted as an innovation of Edward I and were presented as a method of seeking redress from the king by virtue of his power of prerogative where none could be sought through the ordinary course of the law. That is still the case now.

For example, on the issue of capital punishment, many citizens of the nation, believe that this institution is not representing the wishes of the majority of the nation, and their only means of bringing that to the attention of the House is through the presentation of petitions or Private Members' Bills. Neither of those two methods has been very successful in bringing about a change in the past, but at least the opportunity is there to bring the grievance forward.

● (1640)

In Great Britain when petitions were first introduced, it was permitted that they be debated in the House. This went on into 1842 when the practice of using petitions became so widespread that very little time was left for Members of Parliament to debate Government Bills, so it was decided that the change should be made to the rules. Until 1843 when the rules were changed in the House of Commons in Great Britain this method was used. At that time, 33,000 petitions per year were presented, so there was difficulty in having them all debated. After the rules were changed the petitions could be read, as they are now. If the petition conformed to the rules of the House it could then be put before a committee. Debate was not