

Private Members' Business

by Your Honour in respect to this question which has been raised on a number of previous occasions, it is my understanding that unanimous consent implied an arrangement among the individuals who were in fact vying for time in private members' hour, as opposed to unanimous agreement among parties. That may not be an accurate understanding of this, but the comments that have been made in the House certainly give rise to a need for some discussion on how we might deal with this in an orderly manner and in a manner which is agreeable to the House leaders of all parties.

● (1712)

I think that the matter should be taken up at a later date to ensure that this kind of difficulty does not ensue and that there is a general understanding by the House leaders of all parties of the procedures to be followed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The last point made by the minister is quite correct. I think in the ruling given recently the Chair did request a representative of the government to consult with the interested members on the various motions. We are not actually looking at government orders. This is the private members' hour and we are addressing ourselves to motions put forward by private members. Since members are not always available for that kind of consultation, perhaps there is an alternative way of protecting the right of members and that is to approach House leaders, thus ensuring that when a member involved is not available, at least the House leader of his party is contacted and consulted.

[Translation]

To my mind, the point the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) brought up goes beyond the scope of deliberations during the private members' hour. When there is general consultation of the House, occasionally the representative of his party or he himself are not consulted as they should be. During the period assigned to the study of private members' bills, of course we discuss bills introduced by hon. members as private members. When I brought down my decision in this regard shortly before Christmas, I recommended that the government be asked to continue to co-ordinate the business to be dealt with during the private members' period, but to do so in consultation with each hon. member individually. It may be that the suggestion of the hon. member and the criticism of the minister will take us one step further. Those consultations should perhaps include as well the representatives of the parties, to ensure that all hon. members in the House, specially the party leaders in the House, are kept informed of the debates to be held or changes in debates which can come up every day, including the debates held during the private members' period.

Having said that, I shall now submit the following motion to the House—

[Mr. Caik.]

[English]

NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION**SUGGESTION TO ESTABLISH STANDING JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

Mrs. Jean E. Pigott (Ottawa-Carleton) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the National Capital Commission is not sufficiently accountable to those who live in the national capital region or the people of Canada, and exercises its powers in an arbitrary manner without adequate consultation with other levels of government and that, as a just step, there should be a permanent standing joint committee on the national capital region.

She said: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is said that it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, and I am certain that the government is wondering at the rash of editorials over the weekend and at the press coverage of the appointment of the new chairman of the National Capital Commission, the former hon. member for Westmount. I think it is the straw that breaks the camel's back, because one of the things the people who live and work in this city and who pay taxes have felt is that the NCC has become a political football to this government and has not taken in the cares and concerns of those who live and work in this whole region.

It was Harold L. Ickes who said "I am against government by crony". Public office is a public trust, not a political prize. The recent appointments to the chairmanship of the National Capital Commission suggest that the job qualifications for that position have more to do with partisan public relations and assembly of land than the long range development of the national capital region. It seems that candidates for this position have to be former politicians who are closely linked with the present government.

The future of this city and important relations involving many levels of government across provincial jurisdictions need strong and enlightened leadership. The federal government, however, has completely ignored any but the most partisan considerations in the appointment of the NCC chairman. The ability of the former member for Westmount and of Mr. Juneau are not the issue. At a time when the NCC is at the centre of serious problems in this region, its whole operation must be an example of justice and accountability, both in fact and in appearance.

The NCC has now become what is really a national capital corporation in which the "capital" is represented in the dollars and cents of land management and powerplays redirect millions of dollars worth of buildings without the consultation of local elected people, and not in the creation of a meaningful symbol for our country.

The National Capital Act passed in 1958 states that the purpose of the NCC is to prepare plans and to assist in the development of the national capital region "in accordance with its national significance". Is there national significance in the fact that no elected official of any of the regional or local municipalities of the national capital region sits on the NCC?