

*Standing Orders*

move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo):

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word "That" and by substituting the following:

"all the provisional and permanent Standing Orders of the House in force on the date of notice of this motion be adopted as the permanent Standing Orders of the House; and

That the Clerk of the House be authorized and instructed to print a revised edition of the Standing Orders of the House, renumbering as may be deemed necessary and making such technical and consequential changes as may be required."

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Chair will reserve its decision on the motion and advise as soon as possible.

Questions and comments.

**Mr. Blaikie:** Madam Speaker, my comment relates to the issue of electing the Speaker as raised by the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet). I ask all Members to think seriously about what the Government has suggested in that regard. I hope that even as I speak an agreement is being worked out which will make some of my remarks redundant, but I want Members to think about this matter.

The Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure was asked as part of its general review of the Standing Orders to look at the question of the election of the Speaker. There were at least two problems we wanted to address. One was what I call decluttering the ballot. We needed a mechanism to get the names of people who were not getting very much or any support off the ballot more quickly than was the case in our first experience of that procedure. We also needed a procedure whereby we could avoid what happened to the former Member for Yukon. He was unable to get his name off the ballot because he was not here in person to do so.

We made two suggestions. One, that there be a 5 per cent threshold below which your name would come off the ballot. Second, that Members be able to take their name off the ballot either by phone, telegram or whatever, so they would not have to come all the way from Yukon or wherever they might be in order to do so. That would have solved both problems.

The Government accepted the 5 per cent recommendation and then went on to recommend a nominating procedure, that is to say, people would have to actively put their name in nomination for Speaker. That procedure was rejected by the Lefebvre committee in 1982-83. It was rejected by the McGrath committee in 1984-85. It was rejected by the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedures. All three groups unanimously agreed that it would be unseemly and take away from the process if people had to actively put their name in nomination for the speakership. It would lead to campaigning and various other things we do not want to see associated with the process by which a person becomes Speaker of the House of Commons.

It is important that the Government recognize that at the heart of the election of the Speaker is the idea that the House has control over its own processes. The election of the Speaker was both the symbol and substance of that reform. Therefore, it is most inappropriate for the Government to go against the unanimous recommendation of three committees of this House and decide by itself, as part and parcel of this unilateral motion, that it knows better and will implement an active nomination procedure.

I think the Government has become aware in the last little while about our concerns over this measure. Whether there is or is not an agreement, I hope the Government will see its way clear to change this particular aspect of the motion. Whether intended or not, and I do not think it was intended, this goes right to the heart and symbol of reform: Election of the speaker. If the Government can unilaterally change that procedure against the unanimous recommendations of three committees of this House, then parliamentary reform will indeed have suffered a setback. I ask the Hon. Member for Papineau to comment on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ouellet:** Madam Speaker, this is clearly disquieting because the Government, taking advantage of the deadline for Parliament to reach a conclusion on our interim rules and make them permanent, introduced a whole series of proposals that have nothing to do with the parliamentary process nor the proposals put forward by the McGrath Report. The Hon. Member is right in saying this move originates from the Government and is based neither on the McGrath Report nor the Lefebvre Report nor the Cooper Report.

The other proposal to unilaterally change the parliamentary calendar also is disquieting. Thanks to parliamentary reform, orders that were made in the past, Members for some years have been in a position to know there would be recesses on pre-determined dates—Easter, during the summer, or Christmas. Now the Government is unilaterally moving to change a calendar that was approved unanimously by the three political parties in this House, that introduced a little more common sense, a little more dignity into our parliamentary work, that allows each and everyone of us with family responsibilities to know that at Easter, during the summer or at Christmas we, as any other individual working outside this House, can go home and fully enjoy the statutory holidays.

Again, the Government acting unilaterally, without consulting anybody, is about to change the parliamentary calendar that was agreed upon in the past. It is my hope it will come to reason rather than insisting on changing that parliamentary calendar that has proved itself and is absolutely essential in my view to the dignity of all Members in this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The Chair, having reviewed the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), finds it acceptable.