

*Extension of Sittings*

We all remember that regrettable, unfortunate and in my view intolerable incident when the bells were allowed to ring, and it got to the point where the whole electrical system was overloaded and became a fire hazard. I sat several nights here in the House to relieve Madam Speaker or whoever was in the Chair at the time. I sat during the night while the bells were ringing. I was alone, and I thought about the situation in the Middle East. I was thinking about the world's problems. It was all very unusual because there was no Standing Order to deal with the situation, so a group of parliamentarians was given the task to improve our Standing Orders. But that takes a long time, Mr. Speaker!

[English]

It is a long process when you want to change the rules of the House of Commons.

I know that Your Honour wants to render a judgment sooner than later. Therefore, I will not read what I had prepared last night and this morning.

However, we had a report of the Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons. I wanted to quote from Chapter 3: "*Évolution de la Chambre des communes*". It was a slow process to get where we are today because when we deal with the House of Commons rules it must be a slow process. Some people want more and some want less. We came to a good agreement under which we would not have any more stupid incidents like the famous bell incident, and Your Honour was given a lot of responsibility. We have all had the honour of recognizing you, Mr. Speaker, as the ultimate referee of this House of Commons. You are the ultimate person to decide what is right and what is wrong, and because we do respect you, we abide by your rulings most of the time, if not always. Very clearly in the new rules of the House of Commons, which we wanted to be very orderly, it is written that the House will adjourn at a certain time and will sit at a certain time.

● (1040)

Canadians may like to see the calendar of the House of Commons for 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993. We already know how to manage our affairs in an orderly fashion until December, 1993. It is in the rules. As they say in good English, it is in the book.

On top of that, Your Honour was given a greater responsibility. Your Honour exercised his judgment last summer. You first did not see fit to recall us during the recess. I may have disagreed with Your Honour when you recalled us last summer urgently to deal with an immigration and refugee problem. But we came back in August because Your Honour decided there should be an urgent debate, and now it is June 10. By the way, on June 10, 1957, Mr. Louis St. Laurent was re-elected Prime Minister of Canada. I have no notes, but I remember. You recalled us to discuss an urgent matter. It was unbelievably urgent. It was a scandalous situation because there were some people who were dumped by a ship on our coast. Even today,

we are still under the special order because the urgent matter for which we were called back is not yet resolved. Whoever is at fault, we have not yet seen the end of that debate. But Your Honour decided to recall Parliament at the request of the Government because Your Honour saw fit to see there was an urgency. I want Canadians to understand that it is in the rules, it is in the book. Standing Order 5 states:

Whenever the House stands adjourned, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Government, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time, the Speaker may give notice that being so satisfied the House shall meet, and thereupon the House shall meet to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

In the case of the Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, the Deputy Speaker, who is present here today, a remarkably fine gentleman from Quebec, has the opportunity to do so. It continues according to the good British parliamentary system. We have a good line of authority in our parliamentary system. At times I feel I defend the British parliamentary system with more passion than any Anglophone in this country. It is a good system. There is a line of authority. If Your Honour cannot act, the Deputy Speaker can. If the Deputy Speaker cannot act, the Acting Speakers under him can act accordingly. We did that in order to proceed and discuss our affairs in an orderly fashion. That is the reason we have rules. Otherwise, what is the use of having rules?

I see your signal, but that also could be debated because your decision is so important. Your Honour may be put on the spot by the Government and I do not want to see my Speaker put on the spot by the Government. Mr. Speaker is above Government. He is the servant of all the House, of all Members, the Opposition as well as the Government. He is the first servant. He is not the master. He is the servant and he has to use his intelligence and judgment to ensure that we conduct our affairs in an orderly fashion. That is why he was elected. That is why he became the Speaker. That is why, a year or two later he still has the full confidence of the House. He is above us all as our servant.

I do not understand why the Government decided on this course of action at this time. It could have waited. It could have terminated its sittings on June 30, as the rules say, and convinced Your Honour that it was in the best interests of Canada, not of the Government, that this House should be recalled to discuss a very important Bill, and there are important Bills to be discussed. The Government may have succeeded in convincing Your Honour to recall us next summer and, therefore, keep the peace of the House. Otherwise, what is the use of having worked out all these rules? What is the use of having this big book? Why should we have rules? Why should we have had a parliamentary committee which worked on these rules? There were people who year after year after year sat with each other and others to arrive at a gentleman's and ladies' agreement on the way in which we would conduct our affairs in a more orderly fashion without having to go back to the silliness being brought upon this House by those who are now the Government while they were in opposition when the bells rang for days and days. Canadians