

House of Commons Procedures

having the whole procedure involving private Members business improved immensely, rather than relegating it to a period in which it is quite obvious that nobody expects any great amount of attendance.

I am not in disagreement with some of the suggestions which are made in this section. However, it was necessary to move the deletion of the four paragraphs relating to standing order 6 because the changes which are being made eliminate the existing standing order. While this does not set new hours it does eliminate the hours we now have, substituting these four paragraphs instead.

I am not sure if anyone has considered private Members hour in relation to the practice developed over the years of presenting new ideas and philosophies to the House, which the Government may eventually introduce as legislation. Offhand I cannot think of too many examples of this, but since I have been here there have been at least four or five bills which have been accepted. As the previous speaker said, I am quite prepared to admit that in the main this was not as a result of a free vote, but they were accepted by the Government and literally reintroduced with Government support. This should be a consideration when deciding on changes such as those now contemplated.

The hope of the Government, Mr. Chairman, if there is any legitimate hope, is that this will eliminate the problem of private Members hour experienced by Governments within the last four or five years. But this is a problem which we as well as the Government should face independently of rule changes. Other countries have much different ways of introducing private Members legislation. They also have different ways of introducing public legislation through private Members. I suggest that the Government may not have taken a really close look at what this is going to do to some of the legislation which is controversial, which is receiving a great deal of attention and is developing into a filibuster situation. I think the Government have found a way of getting around it, but I do suggest that in days to come the warning I have sounded will probably prove to be the fact, and this particular section will have to be renegotiated.

I have talked to a number of people who say that they agree we should have enough polish and finesse to have regular breaks for lunch. I have heard no Government Member stand up and say that this has been considered in terms of staff requirements or any

of the physical conditions which must be met when such a change is made. I have heard a number of Members say they do not agree with this and they just won't be here. They have said: "When my Whip says to me he wants me in the House between six and eight, I won't be there". That may be all very well, Mr. Chairman, but I would suggest that these Members of Parliament also have a responsibility to Parliament. It is not always the Government which makes the correct decision; some Members who feel strongly about things should also express their opinions. Therefore I give the warning, although I am sure my warning will not be heeded, that this step is going to make for a very interesting two hour period over the next two or three weeks, and we will just see how it develops.

The Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Amendment (Mr. Peters) negatived: Yeas, 12; nays, 60.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Barnett: Obviously the majority of the Members of the committee is not in favour of the amendment which was proposed by our hon. friend from Timiskaming, despite the persuasiveness of some of the arguments he put forward. I would have been happy to have joined him in putting forward arguments on this question, but in view of the general arrangements which have been made in connection with the consideration of these proposals it is probably undesirable that we should take a too-extended period in which to discuss any one aspect of the proposed changes in the Standing Orders.

However, I do feel some consideration should be given to the proposed first paragraph of Order No. 15. I have a feeling—though I am sure the President of the Privy Council would not be prepared to admit it is correct—that when the proposal to abolish the supper recess was originally considered by him and by his colleagues who were drafting it they had in mind providing, in effect, a sop to the Opposition side of the House to make up for the proposal to restrict the number of days spent in Committee of Supply, and the other measure to restrict debate in special circumstances, which will probably be passed in one form or another. It has become obvious that if this was the intention—

Mr. McIlraith: Would the hon. Member permit a question? Has he not been concerned