

repeating myself, I find this a useful precedent which complements the one set on May 9, 1983, and I hope that we shall not have to let the bells ring for too long too often in the future. I can assure you that, for our part, instructions will be given so that this will not reoccur unless, of course, reasons beyond our control justify or explain why certain Members are delayed from exercising their basic right of voting in the House.

● (1530)

[English]

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be brief, but I do think it important to put some things on the record. I suspected some time ago when the bells rang for 15 days that the repercussions of that would be severe and they have, indeed, been severe. We have seen rulings, as you know, Sir, with which I have not been entirely satisfied. As a result of the fear that has grown that bells could ring forever, I think at some point the House of Commons has to come to grips with it as a potential disaster for the parliamentary system.

I want to say something about last night, Mr. Speaker. The vote that was supposed to take place last night was entirely at the behest of the Government. It was the Government that moved the previous question. It was the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) who, on Friday last, asked the House of Commons to complete the deliberations by Monday in order that the vote could take place. The deliberations were completed. One would have thought, given it was the Government's hope that the Bill could be completed by Monday, it might have had its Members here to vote. Not having them here reflects a lackadaisical attitude on the part of members of the Government who are not prepared to come to Ottawa at eleven o'clock in the morning on Mondays. We sit on Mondays at eleven o'clock and we sit all week until five o'clock on Friday afternoon. There are far too many members of the Government who do not show up on Mondays until late in the day. Had Government members been interested in carrying the legislation yesterday, they could have come here on Sunday night as many of the rest of us had to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: I suggest that the excuse being used that somehow or other a storm blew up and Members of the Government could not get here so therefore the vote had to be delayed and that was justification for the action of the Speaker is absolute balderdash.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: I find it offensive, quite frankly, that anyone would attempt to use such an argument in the House of Commons.

Mr. Pinard: Do not be so sensitive.

Mr. Deans: I am being honest about it. It was the Government that wanted the Bill, it was the Government that moved closure on the Bill to limit the debate, and it was the Govern-

Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen

ment that failed to have its members present. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, given a similar set of circumstances on another day when the Government was sitting, benches full, and I were to rise and suggest that because three, four or five of my Members from northern British Columbia were unable to get here in time for a vote because of plane connections and that we would like the vote held over until the following morning, would you, Sir, then rise and intervene?

Mr. Pinard: No, you are a third Party.

Mr. Deans: I put it to you that the rules of the House of Commons are intended to protect each and every Member.

Mr. Pinard: No, the two Whips.

Mr. Deans: If the President of the Privy Council is quietly saying they only protect two Parties—

Mr. Pinard: Two Whips.

Mr. Deans:—I say to him that the rules of the House are there to protect the rights of every single Member, and if a member of the government side is to be given additional rights to those given to Members on this side of the House from this Party, then the rules are not worth the paper they are written on.

I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there is a dangerous precedent here and I beg you not to allow what happened yesterday to become a precedent. It is vitally important that the Government not be permitted, for whatever reason, to decide that on its initiative it can go to the Table, whisper in someone's ear that perhaps it would not be advisable to have the vote since the Government cannot win it, and that therefore, it would be good, maybe, if the vote could be held over until another day, because that is exactly what happened yesterday. That vote was not taken yesterday because the Government could not win the vote yesterday. The Speaker unwittingly, unknowingly I say to you, Sir, without any knowledge of that, was put in the position of taking a decision which supported the Government's right to win every vote. I am not suggesting that it was done with any thought in mind to achieve that end, but that is what happened.

The vote before the House should have been taken yesterday. The vote before the House, had it been lost, would have made absolutely no difference to the Bill itself. It would have meant that the debate could have continued and the Bill dealt with. The end result would have been the same. When Government Members took it into their heads to show up suddenly from their constituencies or from out on the leadership campaign trail to vote, they would still have won the vote in any event.

The result of yesterday's vote was to create a situation which resulted in Members on one side of the House having less rights than Members on the other side of the House.

Mr. Evans: Nonsense.