

*House of Commons Procedures*

the particular period from six o'clock to eight o'clock. I suggest that it is quite likely there will be an adjournment during that period because of the lack of a quorum. In the committees which I have attended I have not noticed a predominance of Government Members, and often the reason a quorum was not obtained earlier was that the Government had not been able to provide their share of the people to make up the committee. I believe the same thing will be true in the House and the Government will be very hard pressed to persuade Members to take part.

I would like to mention one other matter that has not been raised; that is, the role of the Official Opposition. It seems to me that the new House Leader of the Opposition cannot go completely blameless with regard to some of the things that were decided in these very complicated relationships in reference to the Standing Orders. It would appear to me—and I may be doing him an injustice—that most of these changes have been made by agreement between the two major parties in this House for the specific purpose of trying, wherever the rules will allow, to re-establish the two-party system. I am not particularly concerned about the fact that I know the Members of his party are no less interested in having a dinner hour than most of the other Members of the House. In my opinion they are not quite in the same position as the Government Members.

**Mr. Moreau:** Mr. Chairman, may I ask the hon. Member a question?

**Mr. Peters:** Sure.

**Mr. Moreau:** I wonder whether the hon. Member is aware of the statistics on committees attendance. I wrote to Mr. Speaker for the figures with regard to the percentage attendance, by parties, in committees. I find in the reply which the staff prepared that the attendance on the Government side was better than any other party's, certainly better than the hon. Member's.

• (8:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Peters:** Mr. Chairman, I have not come prepared to debate attendance on committees in general, and I have no intention whatever of defending my party and its attendance in committees. However, I sit on several committees, one of which is the Agriculture and Colonization Committee, and I think no one who has sat on that Committee during the past year is unaware of the fact that it is always Government Members we wait for to get that Committee started; and it is always

lack of Government Members which causes the Committee to cut short its session before the termination of the period it decided to sit.

I also point out that I am on several other committees, but as I am not statistically prepared to deal with attendances generally I can only speak about those I sit on. I am not quarrelling about this, but there is a tendency in this regard in other committees too. For example, on the Special Committee on Railways—

**Mr. Moreau:** Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. Member is suggesting that his attendance on the Agriculture Committee has given him an insight into the statistics regarding attendance on that particular Committee. I would put on record that the N.D.P. attendance—

**The Chairman:** Order. That is not a question of privilege. I suggest to the hon. Member that the relative attendance of Members on committees is not relevant to the discussion at hand at the moment.

**Mr. Moreau:** On a point of order—

**The Chairman:** Order, please. The hon. Member for Timiskaming has the floor.

**Mr. Peters:** Mr. Chairman, I agree that this is not a matter now before the Committee. The only reason I raised it was because I was wondering whether we intend to set up here something which I doubt, from past experience, will be successful in providing even a bare quorum. I am also wondering whether the Government is removing the quorum during this period. It seems to me it might be very nice if the mover of a private Member's bill could get up and make his half hour's speech and then everyone could go to supper, and we would not have to go through the rigamarole of talking it out. If the Government would withdraw their Members during private Members hour they could always call it off because there was not a quorum.

If we are contemplating that type of action, must we not be rather silly to suggest that this will really provide more time and opportunity for discussion? I do not think there is a Member in this House who is convinced there is some use in private Members bills. Private Members often find when introducing a private Member's bill that the Government give it no consideration at all. Anybody with any connections with private Members business who believes this period serves some small function, would be more interested in

[Mr. Peters.]