

Senior Citizens Advisory Assembly Act

Mr. Evans: We could defer it to Thursday if you want, and go to another Bill right now.

Mr. Mazankowski: The Parliamentary Secretary has suggested that we could defer this Bill until Thursday. I certainly have no objection to that. As far as I am concerned, we are into the Bill. If it is the disposition of the House to continue, we have Hon. Members on this side who want to speak on it. On the other hand, if the Parliamentary Secretary is suggesting it would be more appropriate to leave it to Thursday, I certainly have no objections in that regard. If there have been some consultations and an understanding between the House Leaders, I could discontinue my remarks and we could go on to some other matters. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that this is a rather strange way to be negotiating House business. I thought that is the reason we had House Leaders' meeting. I would like to have given a little more thought to my comments, but I will certainly accede to what I understand to be an informal agreement, as long as I have the right to continue my remarks if and when we resume the debate.

● (1740)

Mr. Evans: Mr. Speaker, I believe there would be unanimous consent to defer further debate on this matter until Thursday, during which time negotiations can take place to see if Bill S-10 could not be dealt with expeditiously. If there is unanimous consent, we could move directly to Bill C-224, which I believe Members are prepared to debate at this time.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, as far as we are concerned the Bill could pass now. If it is preferred that it go until Thursday, we are agreeable to that. I had the pleasure and honour of the House accepting a private Bill of mine a few years ago, and this is one of the few occasions on which it might happen. We are ready to do it today or Thursday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): There is a request that consideration of this Bill be deferred until Thursday. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Agreed and so ordered.

Shall all orders and items preceding Order No. 73 be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY ASSEMBLY ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine) moved that Bill C-224, an Act to constitute a senior citizens advisory assembly, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to discuss my Private Members' Bill C-224. In listening to the remarks of the Parliamentary Secretary, he said we would extend the hour "if necessary". When he says that, I hope that is an agreement for at least the subject matter to be referred to the appropriate Standing Committee.

First of all I would like to thank Harold Brown, a fine outstanding senior citizen of Winnipeg, who informed me of the silver haired legislature in Florida. This assembly debates bills affecting senior citizens, making recommendations and amendments before a bill is considered in its final stages by the Florida State legislature. This has proven to be an efficient and effective means by which senior citizens are able to more directly form and reform the legislation which constitutes their standard of living. Because of Harold Brown's knowledge of this senior's parliament, I was, with his input, able to draft the Bill based along the same lines as the Florida silver haired legislature, and similar to the popular Canadian Youth Parliament.

The Bill has received a great deal of support from all, including, I am pleased to say, the federal Liberal Government and the NDP. I would like to thank everyone who has endorsed this proposal, and I would like to make special mention of the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Lang), the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) and the Hon. Member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller) all of whom have made known their support for my Bill.

I am exceptionally thankful and grateful for the support I received from the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin). She stated in a recent letter to Harold Brown that she wanted him to know that her Department will, as it has in the past, give priority to any attempts which will enable older Canadians to voice their concern.

It has been made apparent that all Members of Parliament from all Parties are aware that communication between the federal Government and senior citizens leaves much to be desired. Because of the possible all-Party agreement to be given to this Bill, I am optimistic that we as a concerned united group will today provide Canada's older population with a clear avenue to increased participation in the future development of policies affecting their welfare. I believe all Members of Parliament, through their close contacts with seniors in their constituencies and through regular visits at senior citizens' homes, realize that a large number of our older population are not living at an acceptable standard and there is an urgent and immediate need for improvement.

There are today well over two million senior citizens in Canada. In the year 2031, roughly 21 per cent of the population will be senior citizens. Currently a prime problem is senior citizen housing, more specifically affordable senior citizen housing. Other major difficulties include the rate of pensions as opposed to the cost of living, increased health care needs, facing and dealing with fast-paced technological changes,