

*Business of the House*

themselves. I find myself in a quandary because I happen to be a member of two of those Standing Committees. The Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs is meeting at 3.30 p.m. for a clause by clause examination of Bill C-180, the government's packaging bill. Amendments will be moved to that bill this afternoon. The Standing Committee on Transport and Communications is meeting at four o'clock this afternoon for a clause by clause examination of the CNR financing bill, a subject in which most members of the House have a great deal of interest.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McGrath:** At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the House will be going into Committee of the Whole to examine clause by clause Bill C-207, the government's organization bill. I have a special interest in that bill and I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that my privileges as a member of this House are being transgressed by the way the business of the House is organized.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McGrath:** I think it is about time this matter was resolved, Mr. Speaker; otherwise this institution, as we saw this afternoon, will disappear because it is gradually losing its effectiveness by virtue of the new rules which in my opinion have destroyed the effectiveness of this House. Contributing to that demise of Parliament is the government's roster system which is contrary to Standing Order 5 of the rules of the House. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a denial of my rights and privileges as a member of the House, and subject to Your Honour's ruling on this point of order I will be raising a question of privilege and a motion based on it.

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak on the same point of order. Further to what the hon. member for St. John's East has said, this afternoon the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs is to meet. As the hon. member said, the House is in a unique position today in that under the new rules we are going into Committee of the Whole. Surely this committee, sitting as a committee of the House, should override and surpass any of the Standing Committees? I agree with what the hon. member for St. John's East said, that it is impossible for this House to do its work properly if Standing Committees are going to meet in this fashion. If the House is in Committee of the Whole discussing an important bill to increase cabinet posts and parliamentary secretaries and the reorganization of many departments, surely these matters are important to the government generally and to Parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to comment on the point of order raised by the hon. member for St. John's East. It is true that there are several Standing Committees meeting this afternoon and it is true that we are commencing the eleventh day of consideration of the government organization bill. However, if the hon.

[Mr. McGrath.]

member and his colleagues are seriously interested in the efficiency of Parliament they ought to give some consideration to facilitating the passage of that bill so that we can move on to other important matters.

**Mr. Bell:** Closure!

**Mr. MacEachen:** The hon. member complains about the way we organize and run our common business but, as I understand it, each committee sitting this afternoon while the House is sitting has authority from the House to sit. Each committee has to come before us and ask for authority to sit and has received that authority. As Government House Leader I have no authority to determine when Standing Committees shall decide to convene. I realize this is a problem and I certainly have been considering how we can do the business of the House and maintain the importance that ought to be attached to this chamber—

**Mr. Baldwin:** Tell that to your colleagues in the cabinet.

**Mr. MacEachen:**—when so many Standing Committees are meeting at the same time. They have the same problem in the British House of Commons, They have established a standing or specialized committee system and are now complaining that it is taking away the importance that should exist in the chamber itself. I am quite prepared to consider any suggestions that can be implemented but I do not believe that the problem arises from any breach of order or ill will on the part of any hon. members. Rather, it is as a result of the general organization that we have adopted and sought and embedded in our rules.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I do not rise for the purpose of taking part in the argument that has arisen but to ask the Government House Leader if he would not like to correct one statement that he made. I realize he was not on the Procedure and Organization Committee when we amended the rules but his statement that each of these committees has come to the House and received permission to sit is not correct. Under our rules as amended, Standing Order 65 (8) states that committees may sit while the House is sitting. In other words, it is a standard provision, not something specially obtained as the minister said.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I certainly accept that, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** I was going to raise the same point as was raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, Mr. Speaker. In addition, I seem to detect in the remarks of the President of the Privy Council a suggestion that he was imputing motives to the opposition—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Baldwin:**—with respect to the debate on Bill C-207. I think the hon. gentleman has been here long enough, Mr. Speaker, to realize that it is the duty of the opposition to oppose and combat bad and obnoxious legislation.