

House of Commons Procedures

can get any time away from the Government to add to that hour, but I suggest there might be some type of consolidation of the private Members hour, bringing it forward once every two weeks, with possibly fewer bills, allowing more time for each bill to be discussed. As it is, three Members can take up the whole hour. We have some very interesting bills on the Order Paper. There are bills dealing with the freedom of the press. The hon. Member for Port Arthur has one about disclosure of news sources; the hon. Member for Leeds has one about the age of marriage; there are bills on the question of divorce, on lotteries and bingo. These are subjects on which many Members would like to express themselves and they are subjects which are of very much interest to people in the country. But, as I said, three Members can take up the whole hour at the present time and at the end of that hour the bill simply dies, and that is all there is to it.

I think we should be considering some change along this line. I have suggested that at least a minimum of two hours be provided for private Members bills, even if it means that we discuss fewer of them during each session. I should also like to suggest that a vote be required at the end of that time. This would not inconvenience anybody, in my opinion, except possibly the Government Whip. But if we believe in good attendance in the House of Commons, this should be no particular problem. Government Members talk these bills out so that the Government will perhaps not be embarrassed; but I do not think the situation is any different from ordinary legislation, when Opposition Members may move amendments, and if the Government does not want to accept them they simply have to get their forces out. I think it would be more satisfying to the private Members of this House if some type of decision could be taken on their measures after a proper form of discussion.

It may be that all these bills do not need to be talked out. It seems to me that the Government is not using the private Members hour enough as a vehicle for passing certain legislation. During the last session we did pass one such bill, which obviously had the blessing of the Government. I refer to the bill to change the name of Trans-Canada Air Lines. There is some suspicion that a private Members bill would be the vehicle for the discussion of the question of the abolition of the death penalty. It seems to me that measures of social reform could come forward

this way and in many cases pass. But as it is now, I have spoken to Members of all parties, including the Government party, and they are not at all satisfied with the private Members hour. I would certainly urge on the President of the Privy Council that a committee on the rules be constituted to carry on a continuing type of study of the rules of the House, and the reform of the private Members hour should have a very important place in any study by such a committee.

The Chairman: Does this conclude the discussion on paragraph 3?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chairman: Paragraph 4?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chairman: Paragraph 5?

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Chairman, with regard to paragraph 5, I did give, as a result of some discussion the other day, an undertaking that I would move an amendment to paragraph 5 to provide that there would be one day a week when the question period would be one hour in length. Before formally moving that motion I wanted to ask the Committee for a little guidance on one point. I had indicated that I would put forward certain other amendments to different paragraphs. Since we are working under an allocated time proposition, I wonder if it would be in order if I moved these amendments now; or what method does the Committee wish me to adopt to make sure that the amendments I have undertaken to put forward are put forward before the expiry of the time allocated?

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, since we have agreed that we are taking a paragraph at a time, we should stick to each paragraph; but perhaps the Committee would consent to the Minister reading at this time each of the amendments he proposes to move as we go through this resolution.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Chairman, the only thing is this. We shall be entering into a rule perhaps later on, the so-called allocation of time rule, or closure by compartment. Let us follow that course now, because that is what it will be in the future. We will get accustomed to it.

Mr. McIlraith: I think that technically I have the right to move them all now.

Some hon. Members: No.