

Standing Orders

Our procedures are being used for purposes for which they were never originally intended, and the public could be pardoned for believing that our rules have no logical basis at all.

The Chair continues:

Routine proceedings are an essential part of House business and if they are not protected the interests of the House and the public it serves are likely to suffer severely.

Furthermore, the Speaker said:

No procedures should be sanctioned which permit the House to be brought to a total standstill for an indefinite period. Division bells are no substitute for debate.

Finally, the Chair made a request of the House which I think goes to the substance of what we are trying to do here, and it was summarized as follows:

I would hope that the difficulties of the Speaker in this situation will encourage Hon. Members to reconsider the present rules with a view to making changes which would secure the sanctity of Routine Proceedings.

That is precisely what we have tried to do in this proposal. Our view is that for any Member to oppose the motion before us today would be for such a Member to sanction such questionable parliamentary conduct and the Chair has set out the choice just that starkly.

Our proposal will not restrict dilatory motions; quite the opposite. Such motions can still be used as a legitimate procedural tool to delay introduction of a Bill. However, the Bill will be introduced before that day is concluded. The debate may then begin, which is what we are all here to do.

These changes, I submit, are consistent with the spirit of parliamentary reform to make the House a more orderly, workable and effective institution. There are many Members of this House, on all sides, who have dedicated themselves to that purpose. I know the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) and the House Leaders of the two respective Opposition Parties, as well as Members on this side, have on many occasions cast aside their partisan or political differences in order to work towards improving the rules and procedures of this institution because it is an institution of which we are all proud. It is an institution which brings us all together and really reflects all the dimensions of Canada.

We believe the rules which are proposed in the contents of this resolution maintain a good balance between the Government's ability to get its legislation through the House and the Opposition's ability to oppose it. The motion before us today in its timing and content attempts in a fair manner to pull as many things together as are important at this time and in these circumstances.

My hon. friend, the House Leader of the New Democratic Party, has kept pressing for a deadline to make the reforms permanent and today's motion does that. It makes the reform of Parliament permanent, the opposite of which will be the case if such a motion is not disposed of.

The motion implies we will defer until later this year a number of minor improvement changes recommended by sources in the House and sources supporting the House. Many

of these proposals are under study by the procedural committee which has been preoccupied with other items and tasks with respect to redistribution and has not been able to devote the kind of attention to these proposals that it will once that business is disposed of. I expect those proposals will be made permanent as well when they come forward.

Other administrative issues are still before the Board of Internal Economy. The House Leaders have had many clerical improvements identified in their talks. We do not see them as difficulties but we did agree to hold off going ahead with them until the procedural committee has worked them all out.

Therefore, adoption of this motion is not the end of reform, but the guarantee of a solid permanent base with more to come. To reject this motion this week or later would be to jettison very many good, hard-earned things. I can strongly recommend this motion to the House. We are all ready to live by its terms as quickly as it calls for.

Notwithstanding the fact that there are some difficulties and differences of opinion, I am pleased to indicate to you, Madam Speaker, and to the House, that since this debate started, there have been discussions among all Parties to see during the course of the debate today whether in fact some of the outstanding issues may be resolved and worked out in such a manner that we could move this motion ahead on a positive and more unanimous basis. There are some outstanding issues which we are still prepared to negotiate. I understand there is the establishment of a bit of a *ad hoc* committee composed of representatives of all the Parties which will be meeting at one o'clock, and perhaps later on this day, to see whether in fact we can work out some of the difficulties and overcome some of the disagreements which may be inherent in this motion.

We stand willing as always to work in that sort of conciliatory, co-operative fashion. I hope that throughout the course of the day these particular problems might be resolved and that we can move this motion ahead with the unanimity and support which I believe the motion clearly deserves.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, when the Government House Leader began his speech, he said that the principle objective of the motion before us was the enshrinement, the making permanent, of the interim rules under which we are currently operating. If this were the case, we would not be having this debate. Unfortunately, this is not the case. There is a lot more in the motion before us than simply making permanent those portions of our rules which are here on an interim basis.

The Government wants permanent changes in the rules which were not in the interim rules and wants permanent changes which were not in the McGrath Report. It wants permanent changes which were not in the report of the committee on procedure which was tabled in this House only a few weeks ago.

The Government House Leader has described at some length changes in the rules described in his motion arrived at by consensus, by agreement, among the House Leaders of the