

in our Standing Orders, in each and every case which I submitted to you, all Hon. Members were in agreement and willing to give what is properly called the unanimous consent of the House, meaning that everybody agreed to set aside our Standing Orders.

Well, I submit that in this case, it is clear that the Chair could not obtain the unanimous consent of the House to set aside our Standing Orders and make it possible for the Government to have its motion debated in the House.

For that matter, I suggest that Your Honour in his wisdom would not even attempt to ask for the unanimous consent of the House.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I should like to call your attention on a basic element of our Standing Orders which is its permanent nature.

Whoever opens our Standing Orders and starts reading it—there might be some of our colleagues who have never done so—if a stranger were to come here to read our Standing Orders, what would he find first? Even before the Table of Contents, even before Standing Order 1, he will read the Foreword. Even before getting to our Standing Orders, he will read this:

The Standing Orders were amended on Wednesday, June 3, 1987, and came into effect, permanently—

I call the attention of the Chair on the word “permanently”.

—on Monday, June 8, 1987. In addition, an amendment to Standing Order 89(2) adding a new paragraph (e), was adopted by the House on Tuesday, June 30, 1987.

Why do I call the attention of the Chair on the word “permanently”? Simply because I want everybody in the House to be aware of it, since I know that Your Honour understands the meaning of the word “permanent”. It is to emphasize the real meaning of this word. The word “permanent” is used here as the opposite of “provisional”.

Before we were provided with these permanent Standing Orders which we use everyday, our debates were governed by provisional Standing Orders which we used for a while on an experimental basis. However, since June 8, 1967 those Standing Orders have become permanent. As I said, they are not temporary nor transitional. It means that they are here to stay and I wonder if the Minister who tabled the motion which appears on the Order Paper has taken into account the fact that the Standing Orders are here to stay and to be implemented daily and not be set aside to allow the Government to come in this House and say:

... notwithstanding any Standing Order.

The opening sentence I just mentioned is also quite interesting because it provides a specific example of how the Government or any other hon. Member whether on the Opposition side or on the Government side, should proceed to obtain the consent of the House to alter the Standing Orders.

Extension of Sittings

Moreover, an amendment adding a new paragraph (e) to Standing Order 89(2) was passed in this House on Tuesday, June 30, 1987. All those who were sitting here remember that even when the Standing Orders had become permanent and the Government saw fit to amend them, it did not resort to an exceptional measure, it did not use the back-door approach or underhanded tricks, rather it presented an amendment in the House and such an amendment was in that case unanimously passed.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, the Standing Orders are permanent and are meant to stay. They are used to rule on all cases before the House of Commons. They are not provisional. The Standing Orders cannot be implemented at someone's pleasure, whether it is the Government, a backbencher on the government side or in the opposition.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I remind you that in our opinion, in the opinion of the Liberal Party of Canada, it will be up to Your Honour to make a decision, to determine if the motion standing in the name of the Minister of State for the Treasury Board (Mr. Lewis) in the Order Paper is acceptable and may be discussed here. As I said, we object to this motion because it is mainly proposing to override the rules. And I maintain that if Your Honour was to approve it, sooner or later the House could end up in a complete chaos. In fact, it would create a precedent to the effect that the rules are left to the good will of the Government and that they can be overridden any time to make decisions.

Mr. Speaker, those are the remarks I wanted to convey to you to help you make an important decision which will have historical consequences.

[English]

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to add a few short remarks to the procedural discussion that is before the House at the moment with regard to whether or not we should be setting aside the Standing Orders to facilitate the Government's ineptitude and incompetence and allow it to sit extra hours and into the summer in order to carry out the mandate it received from the people of Canada since, unfortunately, it has not been able to carry that out in the normal time allotted for government business.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to hear the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) as I have clearly indicated I would. I want to hear him. However, given the hour and given the fact that we had a great deal of discussion on this yesterday, I want to give a bit of a signal to all Hon. Members that I hope we can wrap up this discussion between now and eleven o'clock. I hope that that is possible. I have heard extensive discussion, all of which is helpful, and I am just giving a bit of a signal, not to the Member for Kamloops—Shuswap, but to other Hon. Members, that I am looking to eleven o'clock to close off this argument.