

Private Bills

Mr. Aiken: I have no idea what went on between the house leaders, but the hon. member for Perth who is carrying this bill on behalf of the official opposition had to be away this afternoon, and those few of us who have been able to make some contribution have been carrying it in the meantime. I do not know what kind of job we would do by going ahead further, but we certainly had no notice of the likelihood of its continuing.

Mr. Knowles: Could we compromise and continue for half an hour?

Mr. Aiken: No, I am not prepared to do that.

Mr. Chatterton: I think judging by the progress we made today we have been proceeding at a good rate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being five o'clock the house will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely public bills and private bills.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr. S. Perry Ryan (Spadina) moved the second reading of Bill No. C-64, to provide for a Canadian national anthem.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this Bill No. C-64, an act to provide for a Canadian national anthem, was originally introduced in the house on December 2, 1963 as Bill No. C-115 in the first session of this parliament. It was not reached in the first session but it has been standing for some months at the head of the list during the present session.

I did not proceed with it earlier this session out of deference to item No. 45, placed on the order paper on May 28 last, in the name of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), but as I have now been given to understand that item No. 45 will not be proceeded with during the current session I would like to go ahead with my bill.

Mr. Speaker, "O Canada" is by popular usage and custom both at home and abroad the national anthem of Canada. It has not however been formally constituted by legislation as such. Furthermore, there are many versions and arrangements of the words and music in both French and English. The purpose of this bill is not only to constitute "O Canada" the national anthem of Canada but to spell out specifically the official words and music in both languages.

This bill provides that the music shall be as originally composed and written by Calixa

[Mr. McIlraith.]

Lavallée and as subsequently arranged by the Hon. R. Stanley Weir. It provides further that the words in French shall be the first verse and refrain of the Routhier version, and the words in English shall be the first verse and refrain of the Weir version. This selectiveness between verses is not of my choosing while drafting this bill but rather has evolved over the last eight decades by popular usage across this entire country.

Hon. members may wonder why clauses 4 and 5 of Bill C-64 limit the official words in French and English to the first verses of the Routhier version and the Weir version respectively, but again, these are the most popular verses.

Encyclopedia Canadiana, 1962 edition at page 250 of volume 7, in the second column says:

Of the French words, the first stanza is now generally the only one that is sung.

You may be of the opinion that a similar statement could be made with accuracy about the English words. At any rate, at page 251 of the same volume the encyclopedia sets out the English words and music as copyrighted, and only the words of the first verse and refrain of the Weir version appear.

In this day and age a short, streamlined, stirring anthem would seem to be the requirement for most occasions. For those who feel that there could be times when it would be desirable to sing additional verses in either language, they are of course free to sing any verses from the existing versions or even to compose new ones. Furthermore, under clause 6 power is given to the governor general in council to add verses to either the French or English versions for use on special occasions.

I trust that all hon. members will be in substantial agreement with me that there should be only one verse and chorus in each language. Other verses would seem to be unnecessary and out of spirit with our times. You may be of the opinion that brevity is merited in an anthem. People do not start to look for exits or reach for overcoats when there are no repetitive verses or refrains. You may agree that our anthem should be clear, true and short.

Mr. Speaker, the most universally popular song of Canada that is sung or played on public occasions is "O Canada". The Gallup poll on February 1 of this year reported that 78 per cent of Canadians think that "O Canada" should be Canada's national anthem.