



Fourth Session — Thirty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

STANDING COMMITTEE
on
RULES OF THE HOUSE

29 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Harry E. Graham
Speaker*



10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE RULES OF THE HOUSE
Monday, February 25, 1980

Time: 10:00 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Hon. Harry E. Graham (Birtle-Russell)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, I believe we have a quorum. We'll call the meeting to order.

The last meeting of the Rules Committee dealt with various subjects and most of those subjects were held back, I believe, for future consideration. Now, is there any particular order in which you want to address yourself to the various problems that we have? I have a couple of items that I would like to bring forward to the meeting as a result of the opening of the Legislature. Whether you want to deal with that now or at the end, is up to the meeting.

HON. GERALD W.J. MERCIER (Osborne): Mr. Chairman, why don't you proceed with those items.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is that agreeable? (Agreed)

On the opening day, additional lighting was put in the Chamber for extra light, to try and improve the lighting. It was done purely as an experiment and I was wondering if any of the members noticed it or had any objection to it. Did it cause any trouble to anyone with it reflecting in their eyes or anything of that nature?

There has been some concern from the television people that the lighting that is in the House at the present time does cast shadows on the faces of the members of the Chamber. And they have been concerned and they would like to see the lighting in the Chamber upgraded. But we, as a Rules Committee, have stated previously that if there was any cost involved, it had to be borne by the media that was doing the work. I believe that is the present state that was the last decision made by the Rules Committee.

The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. SIDNEY GREEN (Inkster): Mr. Chairman, I didn't notice that there was any change, therefore, it wouldn't bother me personally. The only thing that I would ask is whether these lights are optional, in other words can we turn them off. Because during the hot days - I expect we'll have hot days in the months of July and August - the lights do generate more heat than is necessary. As long as we can turn part of them off I don't see any problem myself, personally.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, maybe on the other hand, is it possible that you could turn them up to increase the heat, and we might, in that way, reduce the amount of time we spend here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. PETER FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have no desire to get into the controversy about heat one way or another. I think we're supposed to be conserving instead of trying to create more, so I would imagine the Honourable Attorney-General was joking. I should only like to say that I did notice them and possibly it doesn't affect all members. It depends where you are sitting.

The ones that were in the balcony, some of them were facing us and they were very bright and I hoped that when the cameras went out after the Lieutenant-Governor, that they would turn them off, but they didn't. Now, that's only a personal experience; some others may have other opinions. But I do know that some people are affected by glare and it does bother them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I should read to you a copy of a memo from Mr. Lorne Chapple, TV Editor of the Information Services, and it was addressed to Mark Stefanson, Supervisor of Radio and TV Information Services. It was dated February 11 and the subject was Television Lighting in the Legislative Chamber.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

"With the upcoming Legislative Session close at hand concerns are again being expressed by the television media over the quality of video pictures from the Chamber, which have been available during the question period of the past two sessions. The poor picture problem stems basically from the Chamber lighting in which the principal light sources are located in the Chamber dome, and the projected light is downward on a close to vertical axis. A lighting placement of this nature results in heavy facial shadows, specular reflections from foreheads, bald spots and noses, giving a grotesque unnatural pictorial characterization to members when they are on camera. Such a pictorial presentation becomes even worse when it is compared to presentations originating from the House of Commons in Ottawa or the Legislatures in Toronto or Regina where extensive effort has been made to provide proper lighting for television coverage.

At a meeting in the Chamber of February 7, attended by Walter Weiss of the Department of Government Services, Bob Hawley, Lighting Director of the CBC and myself, a consensus was reached that the problem should be examined closely with a view to upgrading and modifying the Chamber lighting system to make it more compatible with television requirements. It was pointed out that television lighting is basically good lighting and would likely serve the ongoing needs of the Chamber in session as well as requirements for television's purposes.

Proper selection and placement of lumen area would reduce contrast ratios and by putting light where it is more useful would tend to reduce glare from paper and desk tops, open up the shadows across the room even in the galleries without adding any appreciable distraction, all of which would enhance the comfort and well-being of the members without interfering in any way with the aesthetics.

I would suggest that the following steps be taken:

1. That Bob Hawley of the CBC be invited to head up a lighting demonstration, the evaluation team, along with representatives from CBC English, CKY TV, CKND TV, both Winnipeg cable stations and the Department of Government Services, to devise and recommend an alternative to the present Chamber lighting system, which would be compatible with television coverage requirements which would be of added benefits to the members.

2. That the Standing Rules Committee of the House through Mr. Speaker, be invited to participate in evaluation of any alternative lighting system demonstration, and to assess its effectiveness for the members.

3. That ultimately the Department of Government Services be asked to seek authority to expend funds and carry out permanent installation of an approved system that might be recommended, where such an installation is of demonstrable value to the members, which may also enhance T.V. coverage.

In Ottawa, Toronto, Regina and Edmonton the new lighting system, while initially designed to improve picture quality and television coverage, has been of considerable value and comfort to the members.

Without some drastic change in the lighting environment of the Chamber area, I see little prospect of any Member of the Manitoba Legislature being placed in anything but a bad light during television coverage of events such as the question period.

I responded by pointing out to Mr. Stefanson, and through him to Information Services, that the present restriction that we have placed, through the Rules Committee, is that there can be no expenditure of public funds for any television coverage in the Chamber. So their third point was not one that we could consider at this time.

The lighting that was used on opening day was in there only for that one day and that was why I am asking you now whether there is any serious objection. I pointed out to them if I heard one objection then we would not go at all, because the welfare of the members is the first consideration, rather than television. Now that is why I raised the subject up.

The Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This particular subject was raised previously at not only the Rules Committee but when we were having our negotiations with the broadcast people. And, if I recall, at that time they said they were going to get an improved camera which didn't require all that lighting. Now we're back to the position again where they want more lighting, so I would like to know: Did they do away with the idea of getting a better camera or is there none available, or is it just that they want us to participate and that we should be the ones that are giving of ourselves in respect to what is occurring in the Chamber?

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

Now I realize that we need the media, but I agree with you that the members are the ones that are going to have to work and live under the conditions and if they are not suitable we're not going to get our work done in comfort.

MR. SPEAKER: I checked into this with a couple of Members of Parliament who informed me that when the lighting in the House of Commons was changed, the temperature in there rose between five and ten degrees. I don't know whether that was Celsius or Fahrenheit; I imagine it would be Fahrenheit.

The Honourable Minister without Portfolio.

HON. EDWARD MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry I was a few minutes late in getting to the meeting today. I would have hurried even more had I known that we were going to be engaged in shadowboxing here this morning. I really hadn't noticed any real problem with shadows in the House; those that I did notice were on the opposition side of the House and not on the government side, so I assumed that those shadows were from coming events which were coming before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if you can tell me if the lights that were put up on opening day were done by Government Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would hope not, I assumed they were put up by CBC. I am not positive on that though.

MR. MERCIER: Well, perhaps, Mr. Chairman, in view of the point you've raised as to whether or not there are any objections, I haven't heard any objections but I would like the opportunity to ask our caucus if they have any objections to the lights that were up or whether they were even noticed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Radisson.

MR. ABE KOVNATS: Mr. Chairman, as one who is directly affected with a bald spot and a nose that might reflect with the additional light, I, for one, didn't notice the lights at all on opening day and I was there for the whole day. From talking to some of the other members, I have not heard it mentioned at all, and if it does improve the quality of the television I just don't think that it can affect us, at this time particularly. If we find it uncomfortable as we get on into the warmer months, not warm because of debate but into the warmer months July and August, if we are here that long, I would think that we would make the necessary changes at that time, but I can't see any objections at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, for the moment what is being asked is an attempt to see whether there is a problem, not lights. As I have heard the letter, they want to set up some type of examination to see whether it would be a problem. So there is no request at the moment for a change, although there was this change which some people noticed, some people didn't notice.

It seems to me that there should be no problem with respect to the change. I notice they have included the media and then they said CBC English. I don't know why they didn't just say CBC. I really don't know why they didn't. The CBC, I suppose, has a full network. But, nevertheless, they're just asking whether we would see whether there would be a problem and, on that basis, there is no change made, no change requested until they've had this examination, at which point, I suppose, everybody would be better informed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Pardon me. Just to clarify the record, it says CBC ENG., now I assumed it was English; it could also be Engineering.

MR. GREEN: It may be.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. CHAIRMAN: The reason I raised the issue at this time is that it has been traditional that the Speaker carry out any negotiations and he should report to the Rules Committee what is going on, and I wanted to report to the Rules Committee at this time we are doing some experiments and there may be a time when we want to officially do an assessment of it. But I wanted to report to you at the present time what is transpiring.

The second point that I wanted to raise is the. . .

MR. GREEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, I assume that unless I hear to the contrary, that the experiments will continue but there will be no decision made. Is that the disposition or is there an objection to that disposition?

MR. CHAIRMAN: At the present time we have not had a meeting as has been suggested by Mr. Weiss, Mr. Holly, the CBC and myself, we have not held that meeting as yet. They did have permission from me to put the extra lights in for opening day only which they have usually had in the past.

I am informed by the Legislative Counsel that ENG means Electronic News Gathering, so we now know that it was the CBC Electronic News Gathering system.

MR. KOVNATS: So it appears that there isn't a difference in lighting between English and French. Well, I think that we should have bilingual lighting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I also want to report to the Rules Committee that I might have, in error, prior to opening day I received a request from United Press asking for permission to put cameras in the Chamber for taking of pictures without flashbulbs. I refused that request but I noticed on opening day that there was a camera in the press gallery taking still pictures. I know also that in the past we have been quite concerned about the taking of pictures in the Chamber by cameras that have not been authorized and I raise the issue now to see if there is some direction the Rules Committee wish to give me in respect to the still cameras in the Chamber. It's something you can think about and maybe give me the benefit of your wisdom at a future meeting.

Now if we want to proceed with the questions that were unresolved at our last Rules Committee meeting; is there any particular order in which you want to proceed with them?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, there were two proposals that I distributed at the last meeting. I wonder if the Clerk has copies available for people who may not have retained them.

MR. CLERK: They're made from my copies, Mr. House Leader, and there may be some markings on there that I would ask the members to simply disregard.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Has everyone received a copy? May we proceed?
The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I would again just point out for the record a couple of corrections in Section 2 (2), in the 3rd line, "meet on the Friday of that week", that should be "meet on the Friday preceding Monday", and in Section 3 (2), in the 2nd line, the word "say" is really the word "day". On the 3rd page, the heading of the last paragraph should be "Committee of Supply on Thursday evening", not Wednesday evening.

Mr. Chairman, I'm prepared to move both motions. I take it I should read them into the record unless there is someone who wishes to dispense with the reading of the three pages.

MR. GREEN: Why should we have it read, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It has then been moved by the Honourable Attorney-General. Do we need a seconder?

MR. CLERK: Not in Committee.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion?
The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have been on this committee for a number of years and I don't recall where we passed motions of this kind without at least having tried to arrive at some negotiated consensus. Now it seems to me that the government is prepared to make its first and only offer as final and proceed with the rule changes in this regard.

Our caucus has discussed this in depth and they felt that the hours that we are sitting at the present time are adequate, in fact, they felt that possibly the redistribution of our workload could come better by trying to allocate a second sitting of the year, which would still be just one session; and there were some other alternatives that were proposed. But if the government is prepared to proceed and since it has the majority it will succeed, then there is no point in discussing the matter.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I had proposed these two items for discussion at the last meeting of the committee. There were some concerns raised with respect to Private Members' Hour. I pointed out that that Private Members' Hour had never been used, at least during my experience in the Legislature, during this session. There were concerns raised about committee meetings. I believe that this arrangement, reallocation of working hours, will provide for a much more efficient method of committee meetings by not requiring, for example, all members of the House to remain in the Legislature on a Friday when a committee is meeting, or a Thursday evening when a committee is meeting, and only those members who are on the committee will be required to be here and other members can more usefully use their time on constituency work or Cabinet meetings wherever the case requires.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that this will allow for greater utilization of a member of the Legislature's time, that it will not be a reduced workload, that in fact the number of hours will probably increase when we move into Estimates, which is more than 50 percent of the time of the Legislature. I would expect that committees dealing with Estimates will be meeting on Thursday evenings, depending on the progress that is made during the day.

We want to be open on this, Mr. Chairman. It may be that it will not work out. We would like to try these rules out and see how they work out. I think it will provide for improvements in our meetings, but if it doesn't or if some serious objections are raised by members of the House to these new rules we are prepared to look at them with an open mind. But to date, Mr. Chairman, I have not heard a valid objection to the proposed changes in rules. It may be that my honourable friend, the Opposition House Leader, has a difficult time getting a consensus from his caucus, but I certainly have not heard any valid objection to the proposed changes in the Rules of the House and I would like to see them introduced and tried. If it's found there is some serious problem with them we would most certainly look at that with an open mind and be prepared to modify or amend the proposal. I think it's worth a try.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

MR. D. JAMES WALDING: Mr. Chairman, the Attorney-General, in speaking to this, really went to the argument of the motion itself; he really didn't answer the point put forward by my colleague, the Opposition House Leader, that this committee has always, in my memory anyway, operated by consensus. There was a suggested compromise put forward at our last meeting which both sides said that they would take back and consider. It now appears that the government is not even prepared to consider that, that they are not going to seek for a consensus of this committee and that they're going to move to use the weight of the government majority to push this through, despite all of the objections of this side. Not only that they are going to use their majority in this Committee, they would presumably take it into the House and use the government majority to do that, which I suggest is somewhat of a precedent, Mr. Chairman. It's something that we did not do when in government but if the Conservatives want to operate this way it would simply invite us to operate in the same manner when we occupy that position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Crescentwood.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. WARREN STEEN: Mr. Chairman, the real reason behind this change is to permit, particularly our rural members, so that they can have that fifth day of the week, the Friday, for constituency business. The compromise that was discussed by one of the members opposite was to adjourn at 12:30 or 1:30 on Friday. Well, as you know, Mr. Chairman, members in the western part of the province and the northern members, and the members opposite do have membership from northern Manitoba. If they leave the buildings mid-Friday afternoon they're not going to get home until very late Friday evening and so they're really not much further ahead in the game of spending time at home in their constituencies. What we've tried to do is opt for a four-day sitting period per week and leaving that fifth day for members to do constituency work, for the government to have extra Cabinet meetings, to have Ministers to have time with departmental people.

I am sure that the numbers of sitting days during this session or any other session is still going to be as many as it was last year and the year before. We have sort of set a tradition of sitting somewhere between 90 and 110 days per session based on the workload that has been presented by the government of that time and that this is not going to reduce the number of sitting days, or sitting hours, that the session is in session. What we're going to do is likely increase the length of the session by perhaps two to four weeks because we're taking that fifth day of the week out and we're spreading the workload over a longer period.

But what we're trying to do is permit members, particularly rural members, to get back into their constituencies and do their constituency work, and we in our caucus have had a number of rural members that have complained that they don't get enough time to spend at home. And then what they try to do is take a Monday off and ask other members to cover for them so that the government has the majority at all times, and this is not right. They should be here when the session is in session and they should be permitted certain constituency time, and this is what the goal of this change is, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, what the Member for Kildonan and the Member for St. Vital have said is quite correct, that generally, and I guess we can take some pride in it, all of us, we have been able to make substantial changes, but substantial ones, not ones that are meaningless with regard to, for instance, the Estimates time, with regard to Closures Motions. All of these changes, although they are substantial, they are recognized by both sides of the House as being necessary, and I think, for the most part, have proved to be good changes. That's certainly the desirable way and I really believe that if there is a hope of doing it that way we should still try it. I don't know that the efforts have been strong enough and I am not in a position to say who didn't try hard enough. But I have to say to the Member for St. Vital that, as a person who could be on either side of the House and in government or in opposition, that I don't think any government can say that they're not going to change any rule except by consensus; and certainly I would not want to make such an undertaking. All I can do is point to history and say that when I had something to do about it it was never done. That doesn't mean that I would never do it. I'd be the last person to say that I am going to permit the majority to be stopped by a minority group.

I do, however, say that that's not an undesirable thing, particularly with regard to rules. And I'm going to plead with the government, knowing that there is some concern about this. It's a genuine concern. It's not a concern that is merely obstinacy; it is a concern with regard to a question period. It is a concern with regard to a Private Members' Day, which is available, although I'm not really that much concerned about that because history has shown that it has never been used, never mind when my friend the Attorney-General was in the House, but even before that. However, it's there, and if there is a way of keeping these things and possibly finding that we can make a change we should try it.

So far as the members are concerned, that my friend the Member for Crescentwood is talking about, some of them will be absent. There are lots of us who are absent from time to time by virtue of other activities, all of which are in keeping with being able to be a good MLA. What we know is that a person missing Friday will only be missing a couple of hours, rather than missing a whole day, or else he could leave at 12:30 in the afternoon, which gives most people a time to get back.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, because I haven't really heard that there has been some effort to see whether there is a resolve, I would like to move an amendment to the motion, and I will read it and spell it out if you like but I prefer to move it on a principled basis and then if it's accepted in principle then we can get the words.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

But I would move that the present sittings be changed in the following respects:
That where we start at 2:30, we start at 2:00 o'clock.

On Friday, we continue until 1:30 with the last Members' Hour being Private Members and no additional work on Friday.

I believe that those are the only changes and, Mr. Chairman, in urging some conciliation on this amendment, it would mean that eventually we would find out whether the Friday morning is really necessary. I happen to think that it is, but it may not be. If I see that the Attorney-General or the Leader of the House is introducing work on Friday, which is a counterpart to the work that is being done in the House Friday mornings - every Friday morning in terms of important committees, or such - then I would perhaps be inclined to urge other changes. But in the meantime I would urge that we do accede to this because my impression is that Friday afternoon is not a crucial time and that the work that is done on a Friday afternoon sometimes is lost, merely because it is not a crucial time.

To the Member for Crescentwood, who says that this would increase the length of the sitting, that's counter to the position taken by the House Leader, who says that you're going to put all those hours in anyway in the first four days and therefore it shouldn't increase the life of the sitting. I mean, that's part of the argument that was presented on that basis, that all of those hours would be sandwiched in. We'd start working Wednesday night. We'd work at 2:00 o'clock every day. (—Interjection—) Pardon me? Oh, yes, we'd work Wednesday? Not Wednesday; so we would lose those hours. I got the impression that we would make up most of the hours that are lost by starting at 2:00 o'clock and skipping out all of Friday. However, if I'm misunderstanding it doesn't matter.

My proposal, Mr. Chairman, is that in the interests of trying to maintain procedures which are acceptable to all of the members of the House that there be a little give each way and that we amend the proposal by those two changes:

1. That we sit every day starting at 2:00 o'clock, where we start at 2:30;
2. That we sit Friday from 10:00 o'clock to 1:30, with the last hour being Private Members' Hour, and I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Well, Mr. Chairman, the proposal is not acceptable, because it doesn't serve to accomplish what we want to accomplish. To not sit as a whole Legislature on one day follows a precedent set by the vast majorities of the Legislatures in this country, and I say to use that day where necessary for committee meetings provides for a better utilization of a Member of the Legislature's time.

I regret, Mr. Chairman, that we have not been able to arrive at a consensus on this committee. But at the same time, as I've said before, I don't see a valid objection to the proposal. I look at the precedent set by so many other Legislatures and I think there's merit in the proposals to better utilize a Member of the Legislature's time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Attorney-General indicates that he's not prepared to move off his position. I want to indicate to him that what is occurring under this particular proposition that he's got as a motion, the opposition is losing ninety minutes of time.

The Honourable Member for Crescentwood has indicated that we'll be sitting the same number of hours and I would concur, so that would take us probably into July and August, if he is correct. And I suggested if we were going to propose this, that we should have a consideration of looking at what other Legislatures are doing, that we sit twice a year.

The Attorney-General indicates that this is what is occurring in all the other jurisdictions; they've gone to a four-day week. But he very nicely forgets to admit that all of them are sitting twice a year and Manitoba is only sitting once a year. So he is not proposing something which is going to expedite the work of the House; all he is going to do is try to cram it more into a shorter period of time in the spring. If he had suggested that we could sit twice a year, possibly we could accept his proposal. But at the present time under the present conditions, we can't even look at it.

I am prepared to say that we are prepared to look at the proposal of the Honourable Member for Inkster, but not on the exact hours that he has suggested. Our members feel that the lunch hour is very important, especially when the House is sitting, and that half-hour would make it a very very difficult time to get back on time, considering that caucus in both

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

cases usually meets prior to the House sitting anyway. So you'd be looking at having to be back at 1:00 o'clock and you couldn't very well have lunch with people who are working and want to meet your constituents. So, therefore, I am prepared to go the route of 2:30 every day and a half day on Friday till 1:30, which would give the opposition its normal question period, plus the option of the Private Member's Hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I did not believe that the starting at 2:00 was crucial to my position. I thought it was crucial to the opposition position and that's why I put it in. I thought the opposition did not want to lose that time, which would be lost on Friday afternoon if we didn't sit on Friday afternoon. Therefore, if what my friend is saying is that we meet at 2:30 every day and Friday morning from 10:00 to 1:30, I would have no objection, except I would say we're losing a half hour and we're going to add it on to the rest of the year and I'd prefer not to lose the half hour; to sit from 2:30 to 6:00, so that you get 6:00 to 8:00, which is two hours to come back so as to not lose the half hour. But really what I'm saying is I'm prepared to consider anything that is reasonable and where I think the Attorney-General, with respect, and I ask him to consider this, he is our peer in the Legislature, there is none of us who claim greater status by means of seniority or length of service but I tell the House Leader this, that in his initial start as House Leader, which he is starting now as a House Leader, if that comes in with a move to push through rules which are objected to I urge him to consider that he will lose by it, that the rules being made definite does not affect what goes on in the House. What goes on in the House is whether there is some feeling of mutual interest in getting the work done and if the House Leader is going to introduce his position as House Leader the very first thing that he does is to institute this kind of radical rule change I believe that we will all suffer by it and that he will suffer by it. I urge that on him, I cannot claim any greater wisdom in the area, I urge it on him.

If my friend, the Member for Kildonan, is saying that the other proposal is acceptable if we leave the 2:30 starting time, may I say that that is not crucial, that I'm prepared to start at 2:30. I would suggest as a means of making up the Friday afternoon so we're not losing it that we sit 2:30 to 6:00 and that doesn't interfere.

MR. FOX: We're prepared to look at that too.

MR. GREEN: Well, okay.

MR. FOX: But the government isn't prepared to look at anything at the moment.

MR. GREEN: Well, okay. Mr. Chairman, I have made a motion. I have heard an objection to the motion and because I'm trying to gain support for the motion I will leave off the first start, that we not sit starting at 2:00 but that we start at 2:30 and that the only change be that we start on Friday at 10:00 and sit till 1:30. If this meets objection because it's the loss of a half hour, then I would be prepared to present another motion that we meet at 2:30 ending at 6:00 every day and Friday from 10:00 to 1:30. Now, I'm prepared to start with the suggestion that we meet Friday starting at 10:00 to 1:30, to withdraw the section that says we start at 2:00 every day; and if there's an objection to that because of loss of hours I'm going to put another motion because I want to be trying to reach consensus; and if my friends will support that then I really urge the Attorney-General not to try to make that kind of change in one year, in his first year. It will be counterproductive in terms of what will happen in the Legislature and I'm virtually pleading with him that that is not the best way of getting things done. That there will be a move towards what you are suggesting it appears, unless I misread what the Member for Kildonan has said, that there will be a move towards that and perhaps it will lead to the ultimate proposal but shouldn't be so radical, you should move gradually, you should believe in gradual movement, conservatism.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister without Portfolio.

MR. MCGILL: Mr. Chairman, the original amendment as presented by the Member for Inkster was quite clear to me. It became clear too that there was not any real consensus as to what changes, if any, should be adopted by the committee in respect to the opposition.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

One point that Mr. Green made was that by adopting his amendment to switch from 2:30 till 2:00, and then you said you might be prepared to modify that on the basis of other concessions, and to sit until 1:30 on Friday, from my point of view as a rural MLA, I would find that wouldn't be very helpful to me because by the time I was able to start towards my constituency it would be 2:30 I presume and not much of the business day would be available by the time I reached my destination. But you did say that to make these changes that you suggested we would find out whether Friday morning was really necessary.

I would suggest to you that if we make the changes as presented by the House Leader we have a better opportunity to find out whether Friday morning is really necessary by operating, in the change, without it. And then I'm encouraged by what the House Leader tells the committee, that if we find there are difficulties he is prepared to further amend the changes in order to adjust. We know that there may be some things that will develop as a result of these changes, if they are indeed adopted by the committee, that we haven't anticipated. This is not cast in stone, this can be tried on a trial basis and if found wanting then I'm sure that the House Leader and his group would be prepared to further amend it. But, Mr. Chairman, I feel that we cannot really decide whether or not this is an improvement or a disadvantage to the House until there has been an opportunity to put it into effect, whether it be a permanent one or a temporary one will depend upon the way in which it develops. So, I would hope that this committee would approve the proposals, and lacking any definitive proposal from the opposition group, it would seem to me that this would be a way of determining whether or not these changes as proposed would be beneficial to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Radisson.

MR. KOVNATS: Mr. Chairman, I can't see in any way at all that these proposed changes are political in any way at all. There's been inference that it might be political but the reason that I would support the motion of the Attorney-General is that the decision has to be made on what's fair. I just looked around the table, and all of the members are representing urban areas. My feeling is that it's the rural areas that are the ones that are suffering because of the House sitting on Friday. My commitment is to all of the members in the House, not just the urban members. I think the rural members have to be considered and my decision will be based on the rural members being allowed to return home. After putting in the amount of hours that they are putting in now by the end of Thursday evening, to return home to do their constituency work, which is government work, and I can't see anything wrong in reducing the House to sitting to four days as long as the amount of hours are the same, and allowing the rural members to return home on Friday. And out of fairness, I will be supporting the Attorney-General.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Logan.

MR. WILLIAM JENKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here just as a member sitting in; I'm not a member of this Committee, but I want to reiterate what my House Leader has said and my colleague, the Member for St. Vital, that our caucus has seriously considered this. We have made, I think, some counter proposals which, unfortunately, the government seems to be adamant that they are not prepared to make any move from their original proposals that they have made to the Committee.

I would also like to reinforce the argument put forward by the Member for Inkster. I think that we have always operated here as a Rules Committee, when I had been on the Committee, in consensus. We've made quite some radical changes in the rules in my years in this House. I think that some of them at the time I didn't think were of a nature to improve the things that went on in the House but we found out that they did. But, those changes were not made by one group of the House enforcing its will upon the others. And I say, as the Member for Inkster said, we now have a new House Leader on the government side of the House who seems to be determined that he's not going to make any concessions. This seems to be the consensus of the Conservative caucus, the government caucus, and I can only say to you, Mr. Chairman, that it is establishing a very bad precedent for this Committee and for the Rules Committee of this House.

As the Member for Inkster said, I don't think that coming into the House and using the majority that you have . . . We're not just arguing that you can't pass this in the House, because you can; you have the horses on that side of the House to do that. But I can assure you that you're not going to do it easy because you're going to have one hell of a fight in that House to change these rules. And if you're prepared to do that and accept that, well, that's

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

fine and dandy, but you're not always going to be sitting on that side of the House and someday, maybe in the next year or two, you're going to be sitting on the other side of the House and the government will sit over there and they will say, we'll change the rules and never mind the Rules Committee.

I think that's been the success of our changes that we've made in this House, that we've been able to, as members, to sit down and make the changes for the betterment of the House as a whole and considering the opinions from all sides of the House. But if the government is not prepared to do that, well then, really, I don't know what the function of this Rules Committee is, because otherwise the government of the day is going to decide what the rules of the House are going to be. And I think we should be looking at it in a far broader perspective than what we have been looking at it here. Evidently this is what's been going on in the last two or three meetings of this Committee. If the government, like I say, is prepared to use its majority to enforce its will upon the rest of the House, then it's on your heads. And don't come crying in a couple of years time, when rules changes are made, that the government of the day will not consider the proposals, because you will have set the precedent, not us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, I'm certainly prepared to modify the proposal as it relates to work on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. If members opposite feel that rather than meet at 2:00 on each day they would prefer to meet from 2:30 to 6:00, we would be prepared to make that change. But as far as any changes relating to compulsory sittings at the Legislature on Friday, our caucus is not prepared to make any change.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: We have at the present time, two positions. One is the present position which my caucus prefers but from which we're prepared to negotiate, and the government has one of four days. I indicated a little earlier that I am prepared to look at the alternate proposal of the Member for Inkster, with some variation, including the variation that instead of going at 2:00, we would go at 2:30, and I would try to convince my caucus to sit till 6:00 so that the hours would be the same. I think that is the compromised position.

The other thing I would like to state at this time is that whenever we had some very critical changes in rules we never wrote them in as an amendment; we didn't propose them as a motion. What we did was, we went on a trial basis. I recall, in respect to the two Estimates Committees sitting simultaneously, we tried that out before we made that change firm and wrote it into the Rules. I would suggest to the Attorney-General that he, too, at this present time, consider the alternate proposal, which is about halfway in between his position and our position, and that we try it on a trial basis providing we can get agreement from our caucus. As I said, I am negotiating. I cannot give you anything firm at the moment but I am prepared to go halfway, and I would hope that the Attorney-General would do the same thing.

I'm also suggesting that in lieu of the fact that we are going to a shorter work week, we should look at the proposal of having more than one sitting per year, like all the other jurisdictions do. I've heard nothing from the Attorney-General or the government benches that they are prepared to look at a second sitting in the fall, which would distribute our work load. Now I know that even my own members are not very happy about that proposal but they felt that there is enough work in the Legislature that if we're going to go to a shortened week then we have to consider that proposal as well. And so therefore I suggest to the Attorney-General that he at least come and meet us halfway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General. Pardon me, I had recognized the Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, we are only at the sort of smoldering level of a very very strong dispute and as an example as to how this can escalate, I can start calling names. You know, this has been suggested that it's done in fairness to rural members. In the opposition there are several rural members and four northern members. The Member for Selkirk is a rural member; the Member for Ste. Rose is a rural member; the Member for St. George is a rural member; the Member for Lac du Bonnet is a rural member. These people

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

are rural members and, furthermore, all of the rural members have been sitting on the basis of what is now the case, and which we're seeking to see whether there can be any accommodation, but they all got elected on the basis of the present rules. And for them now to suggest that they can only sit if they can go home on Thursday night and that that is the only fair way is presumptuous in the extreme, and there is going to be, not smoldering and nice talk, there's going to be a hell of a battle over what I submit is nothing, nothing.

You know I have to say to my friend, the Member for Kildonan, as to when the House sits is not in the rules. The government calls the session, and I wouldn't want to change that. I know that the government has, from time to time, considered sitting in the fall, and I suppose that's one of the things that they could do, but that is not a rule change. The government calls the session and I would not ask them to change a rule over that; I would ask them to consider whether there is sufficient work. Mind you, with this government there is very little work. I don't know why we'd have to sit in the fall; I don't know why we have to sit that often in the spring. I mean, they could sit; they could either read the kind of Throne Speech that they've read or nothing at all, and each would be equal, pass the Estimates and go home; have enough members there to vote on those issues when they came up, and go home. They don't need a sitting in the fall and from their point of view I can understand that. I know that when we sat earlier, only in the spring, it was like a fall sitting. I mean, we went into August. We went into September the first sitting; the first sitting we started in August and went some months, which was what was thought to be a very short session. So we are engaged in the beginnings of what could be, I suggest to the House Leader, an entirely unnecessary debate.

My friend, the Member for Kildonan, says, let's try it by consensus. If I was on the government side I would be a little worried about that because, although there was that consensus, one eunuch in a harem could stop it, to use Lloyd Axworthy's words. I don't know how I'm going to describe the Member for Fort Rouge or the Member for Inkster or any other member, but the Member for Fort Rouge has said that sending New Democrats to Ottawa is like sending eunuchs to a harem. Well, he should know because he was sitting in this House as a eunuch in a harem for all those years, and really what he is saying is that's what he was; I mean now we have the admission. I can't call the Member for Fort Rouge that, nor would I, but he calls her that. What's the opposite of a eunuch? You know, the female counterpart. Has anybody got a word for me? --(Interjection)-- Yes.

But I wouldn't want it this session, because one member could say we sit tomorrow; I would prefer to do what we did when we were in the Legislature. We moved that this rule change take place for this session. Do you follow me? That there be a time period over it; that the rule change take place for the 1980 sitting, or for the sitting that we are now in. And knowing that the opposition and the government have two different positions, let's proceed with something that can be acceptable and that will not result in this, what I say is a needless, acrimonious debate.

Now, Mr. Chairman, there is a motion on the floor. I prefer to leave the motion as it is, with the knowledge and with notice to the committee that if they reject it then I will change the motion by leaving the 2:30 and going till 6:00 o'clock, so that the half-hour is made up, because I do not think we should be reducing the Friday afternoon to nothing.

But I would put the motion as it is -- I would like it voted on -- and then I will put, if it's obviously not acceptable to my friend, the Member for Kildonan and his colleagues, then I will put another motion, that the 2:00 o'clock be changed and that it go from 2:30 till 6:00.

I suggest that if we have to take those motions and know where the sides stand, then we'll take them from there. But I would like to try to prevail upon the House Leader that this is not something which is unfair to any member. It's not unfair to a rural member and it's not unfair to an urban member.

Your rural members, my friend the Member for Brandon East, have been obviously able to serve his constituency, from at least their point of view, although with reducing margins; at least from their point of view he's been able to . . . maybe that's why he wants that Friday off, I don't know.

MR. MCGILL: I haven't talked to Len Evans about it.

MR. GREEN: Well, the fact is that . . .

MR. MCGILL: You're speaking of Brandon East . . .

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. GREEN: I'm talking about Brandon West. I've always made that mistake. I've always wanted that seat.

The fact is, Mr. Chairman, that the members and the rural members have been able to serve their constituencies. They now can leave, I assure you . . . I can't assure you definitely, I can't give you a guarantee, but you will be able to leave at 12:30, or even an hour before. But you won't have to wait until 1:30 because nobody's going to be here until 1:30, that's my prediction, unless somebody merely wants to show that I predict wrong and asks for a Private Members' Hour between 12:30 and 1:30 on Friday. That's the only thing that will upset it.

But I am suggesting that we proceed with this motion. If it goes down I'm going to put another motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Well, just two points, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Inkster is correct when he says, although there are members on both sides of the House who would like to divide the workload between the spring and fall, that is something that the government itself has to consider and decide when and if they want to move in that direction and call the Legislature in the fall.

On the question of this whole proposal, it is being put forward on a trial basis, so let there be a clear understanding that that is the basis upon which we are proposing it. And we suggest we try it and see how it works out and then reconsider the matter, either during the session itself or after the session is completed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Crescentwood.

MR. STEEN: Mr. Chairman, the Attorney-General has basically said what I was going to say. I was going to say that the government members want the House to sit on four days so that they can have an extra day for constituency work. The Attorney-General has indicated that we're flexible; we can change the hours during those four days, Monday to Thursday, so that the numbers of hours that we're currently sitting aren't reduced. We'll change the sitting times, and so on, but we dearly want Friday as a constituency day. There were members in our own group that wanted Mondays, but we've selected Friday, and that is our position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would just like to say that I appreciate what the Honourable Member for Inkster has said, although having caucused this position I find that I cannot support his motion with the 2:00 o'clock sitting and I am prepared to have a look at the half-hour at 6:00 o'clock. On that basis, I would suggest to the Attorney-General that we are trying to compromise. I wish he would be of the same mind and do the same for us. After all, this House lives by agreement and by the members wanting to adhere to the rules, customs and traditions of the parliamentary system, but if something is rammed down somebody's throat they're not going to be happy and they're not going to live with it and I agree with the Member for Inkster that there are a number of ways that what he's trying to achieve will be thwarted because he forces a rule down our throats. I'd just leave it at that, let him consider it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

MR. WALDING: Mr. Chairman, the point that was made some time ago as to why the government is pushing this to a vote contrary to the usual operating procedure of the committee really hasn't been addressed. The only answer we got from the Attorney-General was, "Well, he hasn't heard a good reason not to change it." Well, the good reason is pretty obvious when you look at the proposal and government wants to reduce the House's work week by 1 1/2 hours or 90 minutes and of that 90 minutes it's 100 minutes that they're asking the opposition to give up. They're asking us to give up one Private Member's Hour and one question period. It's as simple as that. We don't want to give up those two times and we will resist it even to a vote at this committee and in the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion? Can I ask the Honourable Member for Inkster then to, because we don't have it typed out, to again give us his amendment.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I move that in principle, subject to proper wording, that the Rules be changed so that the House sit starting at 2:00 Mondays to Thursdays and on Friday, from 10:00 to 1:30 with the last hour being Private Member's Hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion please signify. All those opposed please signify.

MR. CLERK: Yeas, 1. Nays, 6.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I declare the amendment lost.
The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move an amendment to the existing proposal, again that the rules be changed so that the House sit from 2:30 to 6:00, Mondays to Thursdays, and Friday from 10:00 to 1:30 with the last hours being Private Member's Hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion please signify.

MR. CLERK: Yeas, 3. Nays, 4.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I declare the amendment lost. Are you ready then for the motion of the Honourable Attorney-General? Are you ready for the question? All those in favour of the motion, please signify. All those opposed.

MR. CLERK: Yeas, 4. Nays, 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I declare the motion carried.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, did you include in that motion both the amendments to Rule 65? Do you wish that to be a separate motion?

MR. GREEN: No, that was a separate one.

MR. MERCIER: Well I'd also make that motion, Mr. Chairman, I take it the committee doesn't require reading of the full motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you all familiar with the motion that's on the third page, sub rule 65(8.1). Are you ready for the question?

The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, again --(Interjection)--.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is this the correct motion that . . . Perhaps I should read it then. "That Rule 65 be amended by adding thereto, immediately after sub rule 8 thereof the following sub rule: Committee of Supply on Thursday evening, 65(8.1). Where the Committee of Supply or a section thereof is sitting at half past five o'clock on a Thursday, unless the committee or the section passes a motion to adjourn for the day, the Chairman or Deputy Chairman shall leave the Chair until 8:00 in the evening when the committee or the section shall reconvene and continue its work, and sub rules 8, 9, 10 and 11 apply."

MR. MERCIER: Well, Mr. Chairman, that was all part of the first motion, the three pages of amendments. The second motion is a two page and is being distributed with respect to 65(15) and 65(16).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then I am in error?

MR. MERCIER: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, then I will let the Attorney-General read the motion that he is now proposing.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. MERCIER: If it's required by members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, it has been distributed. It starts at sub rule 65(15) and 65(16) of the rules of the House be struck out and the following sub rule substituted therefore, Vote on Minister's Salary. 65(15) and 65(16) is really a changing of -- (16) used to be ahead of (15).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, this is the one.

MR. MERCIER: Yes. The real change on the second page, 65(16.1) where the Estimates of a department of government include an item for the Minister's Salary that item shall be debated, considered and dealt with first and until a vote has been held on that item no other item in the Estimates of the department shall be debated, considered, dealt with or voted on, the effect of which in the Estimates is to debate the Minister's Salary first and then move on to all other items. We discussed that at some length at the last meeting of this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have no objection to leaving the closure motion in but what we do object to is putting the Minister's Salary first and going through it. We felt that it had been a fairly good practice of leaving the Minister's Salary to the end because of the two committees meeting there were members who could not participate. I have suggested to the Attorney-General privately, and I'll do it at this committee, that we have a further look at this particular rule to see whether we can't find a compromise position. Our suggestion is that the fact that much of the debate that was supposed to take place under the Minister's Salary also took place under the Deputy Minister's Salary. Now I'm prepared to have a look at moving that entire section down to the bottom, so that there would be no opportunity except going into the detailed Estimates right at the beginning with one other proviso, that the opening statement of the Ministers be carried out and that the opposition have the opportunity of at least one member, the critic, having a 10 or 15 minute just general overview of it and then going into the detailed Estimates and leaving the Minister's Salary and the Deputy Minister's Salary and Administration for the bottom end so that any loose ends could be picked up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Mr. Chairman, the difficulty, as we see it, with that proposal is if you have an opening statement by the Minister and a response by the critic, the Minister will want to respond to the critic; the critic will want to respond again to the Minister; and it would go on and on and on. So we're proposing this change in the rules to accommodate what the former Government House Leader said at the previous meeting is, in effect, what has been happening and what the opposition apparently want to do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I would like to go on record as being opposed to singling out any person who can respond to ministerial remarks. Each member of the Legislature . . . And I guess this shows some of the validity of having an independent member of the Legislature on the Rules Committee, as I certainly would not want to - and I wouldn't have wanted to do it in government - suggest that there is an opposition person who can respond but other opposition members cannot respond.

As far as the rule change is concerned, I indicated last time that I could see no real objection in principle because I see a Ministerial debate on the last item, which is subject to debate - that is the whole item - which let's you debate the Ministerial Salary again. And I do know that members of the Legislature have been anxious to debate the Ministerial Salary, or the broad department on the first item, and if that's the case why are we maintaining fiction and debates on relevance on the first question?

MOTION presented and carried.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. CHAIRMAN: Has any member any further item to raise?

Before I entertain a motion for adjournment, there was an item that was referred to the Legal Counsel at our last meeting, dealing with a proposed amendment to the Rules of the House, to provide for the matter of some means of raising a grievance. We had some debate at that time and the Legislative Counsel has proposed an amendment to the rules, and I would ask him to read it.

MR. RAY TALLIN: You may recall that there was reference to the grievance procedure in Beauchesne's Fourth Edition as opposed to the omission of any grievance procedure in the Fifth Edition. And the problem is that the wording of the present Sub-rule 1(2) of the Rules of the House refers to the usages and customs of the House of Commons of Canada in force at the time that the problem arises.

There is not even any reference in our Sub-rule 1(2) to the Practices and Precedents of the Assembly here in Manitoba, which may, from time to time, be different from those which are in use in the House of Commons.

So what I have done is drafted a change in this rule which would allow the Precedents and Practices of the House here in Manitoba to be used as well as the Usages and Customs of the House of Commons in Canada, as in force on July 12, 1955, which I believe is the date of the first publication of the Fourth Edition of Beauchesne, and it would read as follows:

In all cases for which provision is not made in the rules, or by sessional or other orders, the Precedents and Practices of the House shall be followed.

And in cases for which provision is not made in the rules and for which there is no precedent or practice of the House, the Usages and Customs of the House of Commons of Canada as in force on July 12, 1955, shall be followed so far as they are applicable to the Assembly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion?

The Honourable Member for Kildonan.

MR. FOX: Mr. Chairman, when you indicate the Usage and Customs, that doesn't refer to Beauchesne's though, does it? It just refers to the House of Commons that was operating at that time.

MR. TALLIN: Well, Beauchesne's publication indicated, I think, what the usages and practices were at that time.

MR. FOX: Do we, by any chance, eliminate the Fifth Edition then, in any way?

MR. TALLIN: Yes. It wouldn't be relevant except insofar as it amplified rules which were also Rules of the House in 1955, Rules of the House of Commons. It's very difficult to figure out which Beauchesne you're going to look at.

MR. FOX: That's my question I was going to come to next. In that case, where does Mr. Speaker stand in respect to usage of the Fifth Edition, if he has now referred to the Fourth? Maybe it's just for this particular instance. Possibly we should write in "in respect to grievances only" and that would clarify it, because that's what raised our question was the grievance procedure. If we apply it to all other rules, then we have a problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think the problem is a reverse. There are many many more changes and I wasn't worried at all about the grievance procedure. I believe that there is a practice in our House which has not been amended and Beauchesne is not the Rules of the House; Beauchesne is a commentary, and the Rules of the House stand.

What concerned me only was that the Legislative Counsel said that the Rules of the House of Commons apply. Well, the House of Commons has numerous rules about going out of . . . They don't have Committee of the Whole House. They go out to various committees. They have all kinds of other changes, and I really was concerned that we get out of the Rules of the House of Commons but they've been applied insofar as they are applicable. But there are plenty of precedents or practices in the House which I can certainly refer to, which are not confirmed in Beauchesne. Beauchesne is a commentary; Beauchesne is not the rules.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. TALLIN: That's right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Attorney-General.

MR. MERCIER: Well, Mr. Chairman, I would think the new rule - and I've just seen the new rule - by stating that the Precedents and Practices of this House shall be followed, is an improvement over the existing rule and really, by the reference to Beauchesne's Fourth Edition, we're bringing in the grievance procedure which everyone wants to follow. But probably the most important change in the rule is to allow for the Precedents and Practices of this House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there agreement then, to have this changed?

MR. MERCIER: There's no motion yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would someone make a motion?

MR. TALLIN: Can we do it by consensus?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can we do it by consensus?

MR. MERCIER: I think so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Minister without Portfolio.

MR. MCGILL: Well, if a motion is required, I would so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then I suggest everyone is in agreement. This change will then be made.

Is there any further business?

The Honourable Member for Inkster.

MR. GREEN: Mr. Chairman, I move that this Rules Committee not report back to the Legislative Assembly, because, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the changes that have been made have not improved the position vis-a-vis the House, in particular the first change relating to the hours.

I find it incredible, Mr. Chairman, that on an issue of this kind, that the government is anxious to create a confrontation, and that kind of confrontation is totally unnecessary.

There were some allowances, it would appear, that the Committee as a Whole - all of the members of the House - was prepared to go some distance in trying to arrive at a better situation and that procedure, which has served us well in the past, is being unnecessarily and arbitrarily reversed by the majority of the members of the Rules Committee.

And on that basis, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do not report these changes.

MOTION presented and lost.

MR. GREEN: The Committee has to report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further business?

The Honourable Member for St. Vital.

MR. WALDING: More of a question, Mr. Chairman. I understand some work was being done in the Chamber with the recording and amplification equipment. I'd like to ask if that work has now been completed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I don't believe . . . There are changes being made to the sound system, that have not as yet been in place. That is the understanding that I have at the present time.

10:00 A.M., MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY, 1980

MR. WALDING: I knew there was some difficulty in hearing members speaking at the opening. I'm wondering if ear pieces are still available or will be available to members, and is it by request or by some other method?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If any member is having any problem at all, please let me know and we'll make sure that there are ear pieces available for them.

MR. WALDING: Would you supply one for me, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Any further business?
Hearing none, I imagine I have the right to adjourn the meeting.