

Frankly, a better tone of debate is always maintained when personal references are avoided and debate is on the subject of the merits of the legislation before the House.

In any case, those are two gratuitous observations. Again I refer to the fact that the minister took his responsibility seriously, apologized, and withdrew those remarks which I felt were similar to others he made in a parliamentary way. Those which indicated any aspect of impropriety were withdrawn, and he apologized. Therefore, from a procedural point of view, the matter is finalized.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask the usual House business question. In so doing, I assume the order of business given by the Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) last week stands. I should like to draw the minister's attention to the fact that there has been some reference in respect of the establishment of a special joint committee of both Houses to deal with the constitutional matters introduced in the House a few days ago. When does the government House leader intend to put down that motion? When will it be called?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. member's question, the business as indicated last week is still before us. It is my intention to place on the order paper, possibly today but certainly before the end of the week, a motion referring the proposals made by the government to a special joint committee of both Houses of parliament. It will be my intention to call that motion on Tuesday. I hope to secure an agreement by which the debate will be confined to spokesmen for each party in the House. The reason for that restraint is that also I am proposing to put down a motion to adjourn the House on Friday next, June 30.

If that objective is to be achieved, I believe I will require a certain amount of co-operation from all members in the House. That applies to an effort to confine the debate on the constitution to a possible four speakers, or at least to an agreed period.

For the information of the House, when I put down the adjournment motion to take effect on June 30, 1978, it is my intention to have the House adjourned until October 10, 1978.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, before I turn this over to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), I ask the government House leader if he would be prepared to deal with that for a few moments. I am prepared to say now that the debate be limited to one speaker from each party in the House of Commons. If it would be appropriate to do that now, I am prepared to do so.

Business of the House

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of comments to make on this point. It is true that negotiations have been under way regarding this possible debate and the length of it. Perhaps it would be better if those negotiations were to continue among the four of us in the usual manner, rather than trying to settle it on the floor.

Both the government House leader and the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) know that we are prepared to have a debate upon and to arrange for the setting up of a committee to consider the constitutional proposals of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). But we do not concur in the proposition that it be a joint committee. It seems to us to be a bit inconsistent, regardless of our long-time position on the Senate, for the government to propose the abolition of their Honours in the other place and then to ask them to sit in on a committee to discuss what is to happen when they have gone.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Participatory democracy.

● (1522)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hope that even yet the negotiations might lead to the appointment of a committee of the elected representatives of the people to discuss this very important document regarding the future of Canada.

While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, there is one other matter of House business that I should like to raise. It is a point which has been raised already today, once by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) and once by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). Some of our members have been in on the issue in other respects. I should like the government House leader to know that if it is felt that legislation is necessary so that the government can enter into a pooling arrangement regarding the victims of the Cranbrook air disaster, we are prepared to agree to the hour the Leader of the Opposition has suggested. In fact, we will do him one better and agree to do it in half an hour.

[Translation]

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Speaker, I share the opinion of the hon. member who spoke before me. We are prepared to accept a time limit for this debate on the proposals made by the right hon. Prime Minister in Bill C-60. But I also share the opinion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that the Prime Minister or the leader of the government should introduce an amendment calling for this committee to be made up of members of the House of Commons only. I suggest it would be improper to appoint senators to this committee, travel with them from coast to coast, sit with them on panels and see them commit hara-kiri, so to speak, in front of all Canadians. I feel it would be going a little too far and place these senators in an embarrassing situation. This would be a source of embarrassment for the members of the committee. I suggest we ought to change this right away, and we are prepared to speak only half an hour on this, Mr. Speaker.