

Business of the House

since the original text may be different from the documents we have tabled here today. Nevertheless, for the purposes of today's discussion we agreed to table the document which I now have in my hand and which was part of the notice given to me on this matter by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin).

I will take the matter under reserve, subject only to a further contribution and any other debate that might be provoked by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council.

[*Editor's Note: For document referred to, see Appendix.*]

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could ask a question, in the absence of the government House leader, with respect to the business of the House. Perhaps the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) will be able to answer. I assume, in asking the question, that the list of legislation given last week at this time continues to be the list of the government's priorities. If it has not already been done, can there be a designation by him or someone who has the power to so designate that Monday, June 5, and Friday, June 9, be allotted days in accordance with the informal arrangement that exists?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right in saying that the priority list as established last week by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) still holds; we will continue the debate on Bill C-56, and next Monday as well as next Friday will be allotted days.

[*English*]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the government House leader is not here because there are a couple of matters which came up today that are important. However, I will put them on the record, and he can read them. One was the matter that was raised in the question period about the time which might be set aside for a debate on the matters involving NATO, the Prime Minister's visit to the United Nations, our position with respect to South Africa, and all of those matters that were encompassed within the question period. There was some question as to the time that might be available.

In accordance with this informal arrangement, we have an opposition day, it is a short day but it is a day that is designated for us, on June 14, if my recollection is correct. Would the government be agreeable to giving us a day ahead for the purposes of discussing those matters? I would suggest the day before, June 13, for example, and an appropriate motion could be put on the order paper. We would be prepared to contribute that opposition day for the purpose of making up a two-day debate on foreign affairs, because we take the position there has not been sufficient discussion on that topic.

[*Mr. Speaker.*]

We can discuss whether it will be the day after, but we make that offer to the government concerning a debate on foreign affairs.

In our judgment the question period is inadequate for the kind of examination that we want and similarly the standing committee is inadequate for the kind of participation we want. I hope the government will be forthcoming in granting us a day so that we can have a two-day debate. I leave that with the parliamentary secretary.

The other matter concerns the veterans legislation. I am glad to see that the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) is in the House. I know he is anxious to bring forward that bill. It is unfortunate that the Deputy Prime Minister is holding that bill to ransom until the tax bill is finished. I do not think the veterans of the country, who have been anxious for that particular bill for some time, should be held to ransom for the tax bill. I repeat the undertaking with regard to that legislation. We will deal with all stages of that bill in one hour on a parliamentary day, all three readings and committee of the whole.

● (1632)

I suggest to the government that we would take part of the Progressive Conservative party's allotted day on Friday, June 9, between four and five in the afternoon, so that bill can be put through just prior to the time the minister goes to Edmonton to attend the convention of the Royal Canadian Legion. I am, of course, prepared to suggest that we might break off debate now on the tax bill to allow it to go through all stages. That is an offer for the minister. I am glad he is in the House. I hope he takes the position he cannot refuse such a generous offer.

I do not know who is in the position to answer for the government today. I do not know whether the government has taken note of the fact that the holiday for French-speaking Canadians, Saint Jean Baptiste Day, falls on Saturday, June 24, when parliament is not sitting. I understand it is to be celebrated on Friday, June 23. Indeed, federal public servants who work in Hull will, I understand, have that day as a holiday.

There is some confusion in the Standing Orders with regard to the celebration of that day. Interestingly enough, the same confusion occurs with regard to July 1 which also falls on a Saturday. I understand the celebrations are to take place on the Monday. The Standing Orders do make reference to the day upon which those holidays are to be celebrated.

The reason I rise is that the balance of the public servants will have the Dominion Day holiday on the following Monday. It is important that there be some clarification by the government as to the position of the government, not only for members of the House of Commons, but for the staff of the House of Commons. I would appreciate it if the parliamentary secretary would convey that message, because it is appropriate that the government make that clarification soon.