

MOTION TO EXTEND HOURS OF SITTING

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board) and Acting President of the Treasury Board) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or practice of the House, from the day of adoption of this motion the House will meet on the days and at the times specified in Standing Order 24, but not on December 26, 1988.

That, during such period, the Speaker shall adjourn the House on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at midnight and on Fridays at 3.00 o'clock p.m., and that the provisions of Standing Order 38 in relation to the adjournment proceedings shall be suspended.

That, during such period, the Standing Order respecting the daily mid-day interruption of business on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays shall not be suspended;

That, at 6.00 o'clock p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, or at the conclusion of Private Members' Business, the House shall proceed to "Government Orders" pursuant to Standing Order 40(1);

That, for the duration of this session or until otherwise ordered, the provisions of Standing Order 73(1) and (2) respecting committee stage of Public Bills be suspended, and all such Bills be ordered for referral to committee of the Whole; and

That immediately upon the House returning from the Senate after the first Royal Assent of this session, a Minister of the Crown may propose, without notice or debate, a motion to rescind this Order.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks, if I may, by not commenting on your ruling but suggesting that with respect to the second part we appreciated there was no precedent. We took the position nothing ventured, nothing gained. I have to say that, upon reflection, I am in complete agreement with the ruling in that everybody appreciates that closure is a measure which one does not want to use all that often. For that reason I think that your ruling, Mr. Speaker, was sound and will benefit this place for years to come.

I made my remarks with respect to this motion yesterday. While I know that my colleagues opposite will benefit from the wisdom of those remarks if I repeat them, I will not refer at too great length to them.

Let us just lay out for the House what we are doing. We have placed a motion on the Order Paper which suspends the parliamentary calendar so that we will not have the customary Christmas recess. We are going to expand the hours of debate so that my colleagues opposite will have an extra six hours a day Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to debate. We provide in the motion that the legislation will be sent to a committee of the whole House.

Extension of Sittings

Yesterday, I kept my remarks to the procedural part of the debate. I think that my colleagues opposite will benefit from some background as to why we are debating this motion at this time.

On January 1, 1988, the Government of Canada entered into an historic agreement with the United States, an agreement which will eliminate trade barriers over the next 10 years and provide a dispute settlement mechanism. That treaty was the result of two years of hard bargaining by the two countries. We feel that, on balance, we achieved a good deal for Canada. Our opponents disagree. So we set about to draft legislation.

We introduced a Bill in the last Parliament, Bill C-130. We allowed time for the Bill to be considered by the public. The Bill was fully debated in Parliament. Committee hearings were held. One should note that they were terminated before the deadline set by Parliament. The Bill passed third reading and was sent to the Senate.

At that point the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) and his Party, who opposed the Bill from the start, said to the Liberal Senators: "Please hold up the Bill".

There were several quotes, Mr. Speaker, which were made in *Hansard*, in which the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition said: "Let the people decide". The key thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the people decided—absolutely decided.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: They decided.

What happened after the people decided? On November 23 the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition said that his Party will not block free trade legislation, the people have decided. "They want the deal", he said. Here is another quote: "The people are always right", Turner told a few hundred subdued reporters". "We will be restating our position on the matter", Turner said in Vancouver yesterday, "but you know that we let the people decide".

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): On a point of order, the Hon. Member for York—South Weston.

Mr. Nunziata: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I know my seat has been moved, but I am down here. I am still here.