

Invoking of War Measures Act

going to finish this debate. If it is going to go on and on, it might as well be set over to another day. I am not by these words saying we are not prepared to agree to this, but if we do take this supper break and then come back, we would hope it would be for the purpose of finishing this debate tonight. There are a couple of other things we might look at. We could go on to 5.30 or six o'clock instead of five o'clock. We might even consider, at some point, reducing the speeches to 30 minutes instead of 40.

An hon. Member: Oh, no.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There is some objection to that. At any rate, I felt I should make clear what it was we had agreed to. We would prefer to stand by that agreement. Nevertheless, we are not going to stand in the way of some agreement for a sitting tonight.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, we of the Ralliement Créditiste understand the situation the government has to face and we offer our co-operation so that if possible, the debate ends early tonight.

[English]

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, in all fairness to the House Leader for the NDP, it is true that he did make that more extensive agreement, and I appreciate that he is ready to agree to the further proposal that I made as a result of a conversation with the official opposition House Leader. I think at the moment the best thing we can do is come back at 7.30. I am hopeful that then it will be possible to continue and, hopefully, finish tonight; but this matter will be reviewed at that time.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): May I suggest that we will agree to this on the understanding that at 7.30 we can assess the situation and not just diddle along not knowing where we are going.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. There appears to be a measure of agreement between hon. members. Obviously, what we are agreed on is that we shall rise at five o'clock and return at 7.30. The suggestion is made that we then appraise the situation. I suggest we will at least have to start at 7.30 and recognize one of the hon. members who wishes to continue the debate. I should think there might be a discussion among the representatives of the parties on this matter.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Perhaps before 7.30.

Mr. Speaker: If there were no agreement then, of course, we would require unanimous consent and any member could bring the proceedings to a halt by pointing to the fact that he had not given his consent. The agreement is that we rise at five o'clock, return at 7.30 and continue, subject to unanimous agreement at that time.

Mr. Baldwin: Your Honour could issue a proclamation at 7.30.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I have paid much attention to [Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

the speeches delivered in the House today. Since I am not a law expert, there are many points I will refrain from discussing and leave it to the hon. members of the Bar to bring clarification and find the best method of reaching our objectives.

Some items of the regulations submitted to the House appear odious and I do not intend to try and justify them. The thing is to ascertain whether this was the only possible action under the circumstances. If there was no other alternative and we just had to take the action we did, should we pursue it or should we resort to other measures more appropriate to the issues involved?

Moreover the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in moving the motion this morning indicated himself that the War Measures Act provided greater powers than were necessary to settle the Montreal problem. As he was the first to admit it, a series of speeches could be made stating that those powers are excessive. We agree that the act provides more powers than we need, but we do not intend to use all of them. How can this be done while avoiding the danger that, in spite of its statements, the government might misuse such powers? That is a matter that will have to be discussed.

Suffice it for me to say at the start, Mr. Speaker, that we may very soon come up with one of the formulas that may have been suggested by some hon. members, which would enable us to restore law and order in Montreal. What is the situation exactly? Have we exaggerated it? Have we over-reacted? All that, of course, rests on an assessment of the situation and knowledge of the environment. Inquiries were made on the causes of the situation prevailing in Montreal and elsewhere in the province of Quebec. They might prove valuable. However, I could make others just as valuable whose findings will be in flagrant contradiction with those I am talking about. That could be discussed ad infinitum but it will not solve the problem now existing in Montreal.

Perhaps I should have referred first to the hostages since sentimentally, emotionally and morally that was imperative. I shall therefore talk about the two persons held at gunpoint by their kidnapers.

What is the government doing to protect them? What are we doing to weaken or destroy the *Front de Libération du Québec*?

This question was raised earlier. The right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) has asked: Why did you not intervene sooner? You were aware of the situation; it was all in the book that you had in your hands. The script was there in full. What have you been waiting for? You have done nothing.

After today's debate, in spite of all our efforts to convince the hon. members opposite, in spite of the two persons whose lives depend probably on our action here and in spite of all that has happened since their abduction, we are having some difficulty in getting the House of Commons to act quickly and agree to certain measures. You can just imagine what would have happened last year if, without any request from the provincial government, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the provincial Sûreté du Québec, the authorities had said: