

Business of the House

● (1502)

I move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

That the allegation by one Warren Hart, in a sworn affidavit, that he taped electronically, on one or more occasions, the hon. member for Nickel Belt, together with the admission by the Solicitor General that the said Warren Hart was for a time in the employ of the RCMP, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, for the purpose of inquiring into the said allegation and the circumstances relating to any such electronic surveillance of the said hon. member, including an inquiry as to what happened to any tapes of the said hon. member that may have been made by the said Warren Hart.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is referring back to circumstances which had been raised several times by himself initially when the information was first brought to the attention of the House, and subsequently by a proposed motion of privilege which I adjudicated upon, as he has just described. At that time I indicated that if the motion was to be purged of discrepancies or alleged discrepancies with statements made by the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) which have been accepted by the House, and certain other difficulties, it may stand on its own merits. It raises a very serious matter, as I indicated then.

It may very well be that after due deliberation the House ought not to be deprived of the opportunity to address itself to this very important question as to whether electronic surveillance, which is, after all, a very recent and new development, constitutes that kind of interference in the activities of the member of parliament which would stand on the same basis as both classic kinds of interferences which were the basis of privilege in the early days' precedents. Therefore, I hope the hon. member will grant me a few days to consider the matter to see whether the House ought to pronounce itself on this important issue. I will endeavour to adjudicate it in a final way either on Monday or Tuesday.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the usual House business question. I understand that the pipeline bill is now out of the committee. In fact, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) made reference to that. All of us are happy that is so. Could the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) tell us what priority he attaches to that in terms of dealing with it now that it is back in the House? While he is doing that, since this is the last House business question that we can ask in the ordinary way before the adjournment at Easter time, could he tell us what the government's intentions are with respect to the legislation we will be dealing with when we come back here April 3?

An hon. Member: If we come back.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) knows the business for today. Tomorrow we will deal with Bill C-26 then, if possible, Bill C-21. There is a bill in the name of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Faulkner) which may

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

be given first reading today that would be considered. With respect to the northern pipeline bill which will be reported out of the committee either today or tomorrow, I would propose to deal with that bill probably beginning Tuesday so that hon. members might have an opportunity to put down whatever amendments they wish to place before the House. Following that, the amendments which we hope will come out of the committee relating to the anti-inflation program would be dealt with following the northern pipeline bill.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, perhaps it might be helpful to the House if we could be advised today what the government's legislative priorities are as we look toward spring as it turns into summer. Given the fact there are some rumours that we might be facing an election this year, it would be interesting to know what the government intends to deal with specifically prior to that election. If my hon. friend is in a position to tell the House today, it would be most helpful indeed.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to indicate what business we have on our priority list, provided the hon. member will not hold me to an obligation to deal with it before an election. There are a large number of items on the order paper and we will be bringing them forward—as has been indicated, the bill relating to a referendum and possibly bills relating to constitutional reform. As the hon. member knows, there are on the order paper proposals relating to the Public Service Staff Relations Act, and to the Farm Credit Act which are also very high on the priority list. We will have a rather substantial body of legislation to deal with, including a possible budget after we return.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, there is one other matter I would like to mention. I would like to inform my friend that if the government wanted to deal with the pipeline bill this evening, from the point of view of getting it back in the House, if necessary we would be prepared to give consent for that few moments to deal with that matter, because there is some anxiety that we deal with it quickly.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I trust that the additional matter which the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) raised just now can be left to consultation.

May I ask a question of the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) with respect to a possible budget, to which he has just referred? I realize that the hon. gentleman's right hand does not know what the right hon. gentleman to his left has in mind regarding an election. But there have been suggestions by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) that he might not bring a budget down until the month of May, which would mean that there would be no budget if the election is to be held in June. In view of that fact, will the Deputy Prime Minister take this matter up with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and ask him to make it clear to the House that there will be a budget before an election is called? Surely the Deputy Prime