

*Business of the House*

**Mr. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is essential to consider what stage we are at in this procedure today. We have had presented to us in the main motion a suggestion that the house continue in continuous sitting until the order paper has been cleared, and then the suggestion that if the order paper is not cleared by Friday night the house shall re-assemble on December 27 for the conclusion of business.

I have already protested against the situation that will prevail under those circumstances, whereby hon. members from more distant regions of Canada, if they perform their parliamentary duties, will be compelled to return to this place if the business is not completed on Friday, and either miss entirely that assembly at home that has become established in the customs of our country, the family gathering at Christmastime, or else, sir, have to leave on Christmas day to return to this city. I think if that proposal is carried out a really grave injustice will have been done.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member I think is addressing himself to the motion on the order paper, which is not now before the house.

**Mr. Churchill:** Well, there is a close linkage between the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the statements made in the course of the debate on that motion.

**Mr. Speaker:** I cannot allow debate on a question which is on the order paper for tomorrow regarding the adjournment of the house.

**Mr. Churchill:** The motion as it stands is aimed at keeping this house in continuous session until the completion of business. We have pointed out that in our opinion this is a rather harsh treatment of the minority groups in the house. It compels them to continue without rest or relaxation, and suggests that matters which have not yet been debated will have to be considered on very short notice and under rather difficult conditions.

I believe an unusual record has been established at this session of parliament in extending it already beyond December 18, which has been normally the time for discontinuance on other occasions when parliament has assembled in the fall of the year. Looking at the various journals of the house I have noticed throughout that on occasions when parliament did meet in the fall the 18th or at the latest the 19th of December was the time when members were permitted to return to their homes.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Now, after strenuous days of sitting, either in committee or here in the house, mornings, afternoons and evenings, we are called upon by the motion to continue throughout the night. There have been occasions in the past when that procedure met with approval. I think a more orderly arrangement of business is desirable, and that it should be possible to complete the normal business of parliament without having to resort to all-night sessions. If some catastrophe occurred in this country, or if a state of national emergency existed, I would be the last one to object. But under present circumstances I find I cannot support this motion at all.

The hon. member who has moved the motion suggests we would have ample opportunity to discuss any of the matters brought before us. But I suggest that under those circumstances, on any occasion when parliament is in session, someone could come forward with a similar motion and say, "Let us keep on without ceasing, and we might be able to conclude the business of the session in about seven days." The holding of night sittings is one recognized way of wearing down an opposition. It may have been the hope of some hon. members in the house that the opposition would be worn down on this occasion, and that various measures would be passed through without debate.

I think surely for the first time in Canada's history we have had placed before us the suggestion that in order to get home for Christmas we must have all-night sittings of the house to wind up the business, and the suggestion put before hon. members that if that is not done they will not enjoy the Christmas season with their families. I confess that I have been seriously disappointed on this occasion. I anticipated being home long ere this, and having the opportunity to make preparations for the Christmas season. It has been a disappointment to me and to many other hon. members that this has not been possible. But when there is a principle at stake, as there is in this instance, members of the official opposition are prepared to stand their ground and establish the right of members on the opposition side of the house to speak their minds and discuss to the full measures before the house, presenting in this fashion the opinions of their constituents.

This is the only place that can be done. The hon. member for Waterloo South (Mr. Meeker) remarked to me this afternoon that, despite this long and drawn-out debate, despite the peculiar conditions that have prevailed during the last day or two, it really is a remarkable and very fine thing that in