

Business of the House

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we do not propose to object to this motion. The Prime Minister, however, has said that a motion of this kind is normally introduced when the session is coming to an end. In that connection, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that there are still five committees sitting. This will, of course, create a problem for the opposition, but I am not complaining about that. Committees will have to be sitting while the house is sitting, but they are five important committees. In addition to the committees we have still before us for consideration and decision, Mr. Speaker, the bill of rights, crop insurance legislation, farm credit legislation, export credit legislation, combines investigation legislation, which we think should go to a committee before it is finally disposed of, legislation regarding term 29 of the act of union with Newfoundland, amendments to the Criminal Code, and the coal production assistance act.

In addition to that formidable legislative program which includes some of the most important bills of the session, we have still to consider the estimates of certain important departments. Perhaps I can mention particularly the Department of National Defence, which will cause some discussion, I hope. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it requires a good deal of optimism to feel that this motion is being introduced as we are approaching the close of the session. However, I agree that if the session is to close perhaps this motion is necessary.

I would also like to ask the Prime Minister whether he will give us an assurance, so far as possible, that no additional legislation, except emergency legislation because that exception has to be made, will be introduced, and also whether all the legislation which is to be proceeded with at this session will be on the motion paper by next Monday so we may know exactly what we have to deal with in the closing weeks of the session.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Members of this group agree at this time to this resolution in order to facilitate Her Majesty's business, but I think I should take this opportunity to say on behalf of this group that we are of the opinion it is about time we used some common sense with respect to the planning of our sessions. We are, I think, one of the worst groups in Canada for inflicting punishment upon ourselves. Consideration should be given not only to the welfare of members and their families but also to the press and staff of this house by so planning our session that

[Mr. Winch.]

we could meet possibly for a couple of months before Christmas and then reconvene early in January in order to clear up the session's business by, say, the first of June. On behalf of this group I urge the Prime Minister to give some consideration to the introduction of the C.C.F. planning policies in the arrangement of the sessions of the house.

Mr. Alexis Caron (Hull): Everybody is trying to find a way to shorten the session, and I would suggest to the Prime Minister that if he really wants to shorten the session, keeping the Minister of Finance away as much as possible would help to do it.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Before this motion passes, I should like, speaking for myself, to dissociate myself from the views expressed by the hon. member for Kootenay West about starting a session in the autumn. I think the sessions are long enough as it is, and this would simply have the effect of making them longer.

Mr. Winch: I should like, in view of the fact that we have this motion before us which involves the hours of work and, what is more important, the days of sitting of the House of Commons, to ask the Prime Minister whether in consideration of our support of this resolution he will give consideration to the fact that the House of Commons now meets for approximately seven months a year, to the fact that Canada is growing and that the business of Canada and the business of this house is bound to grow in consequence. I suggest to the right hon. gentleman that consideration will have to be given not only to the suggestion made by my hon. friend from Kootenay West but also to the period during which this house sits. I would remind him that it is not enough to think of the convenience of those who live 100 miles or even 500 miles from home. There are those whose homes are 2,500 or 2,700 miles away. There are some of us here who have been home for only five days in the last six months, and who will have been home for only five days in seven months by the time this house rises.

For these reasons serious consideration should be given to a plan by which the house would meet say in the middle of October to debate the speech from the throne and consider preliminary legislation. Then there might be a month's recess, and we could come back in the middle of January to deal with the general business of the house. Then after approximately a month's absence at Easter we could return to deal with the budget and the legislation which flows from