

Business of the House

the offer then made, and it only became necessary to make this amendment because, under the circumstances I have just related, there was from the government or from the mover of the original motion no indication that they were or he was the least bit interested in the offer that was then made in good faith and in the spirit of co-operation.

An hon. Member: Let us vote.

Mr. Fleming: The amendment proposes that the evening sitting today be extended by two hours, from 10 o'clock to 12 o'clock.

An hon. Member: We all know that.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fleming: In view of the delay this afternoon for which the government is responsible, the amendment will not now offer the house as much opportunity to proceed with the business of the day as it would have offered if it had been readily taken up and accepted when it was introduced. I think that delay is regrettable, particularly at this late stage of the session when time means much to us all. The responsibility, sir, will rest upon the government for this delay.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

An hon. Member: Well said.

Mr. Fleming: In case I did not make myself fully heard or understood, I repeat that the responsibility rests upon the government.

Mr. Arsenault: You will find out in the next general election.

An hon. Member: Time will tell.

Mr. Fleming: Yes, time will tell. With the government, responsibility will be shared by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who had an opportunity to rise at any time during the course of this debate on the amendment and say: "That is a fair proposal. I will accept it. I will ask the house for permission to withdraw my motion".

We heard the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre undertake to make some comparisons between the amendment and the motion. His suggestion was that the amendment had the effect of imposing upon the house an iron-clad hour of adjournment. It is no more true to say that than it is to say that the rules of the house in laying down the hour of adjournment, or any other motions except one that leaves the hour of adjournment open, impose an iron-clad hour of adjournment. I do not think that is a fair and accurate description of the effect.

If the business of the house had progressed to the point where we were within sight of

[Mr. Fleming.]

a goal acceptable to the house, then it would be possible for the house to deal with the situation then emerging. But what is the alternative, Mr. Speaker? The alternative is an indefinite session. That is the situation. That is the choice that confronts the house. Will there be, as is proposed in the amendment, an extension of two hours in the sitting tonight, with adjournment at the hour of midnight; or will we have an indefinite session which will not contribute to the effective discharge of the duties of the members of this house? We know from experience that this house does not do good work when it sits late at night. People become weary; nerves become frayed. Experience has surely taught us that we do not do good and effective work in these late hours. We made an offer in good faith, an offer that is now embodied in the amendment.

Mr. Cleaver: Let us vote on the amendment. You have held it up all afternoon.

Mr. Sinnott: Sit down and let us vote.

Mr. Fleming: I have been waiting hopefully for some indication from the Prime Minister or someone speaking on behalf of the government that the proposal, the fair offer that is embodied in this amendment, would be accepted by the government.

Mr. McIlraith: Let us vote on it and we will find out.

Mr. Fleming: It is no use for the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) to say he is not satisfied with it. The decision, in the last analysis, will be taken by the government majority in this house. The government majority will certainly vote as the Prime Minister or some minister speaking on behalf of the government, with the authority of the government, invites them to. Is there enough leadership in the government, Mr. Speaker, in the face of this situation, so that we may expect the Prime Minister to say on behalf of the majority in this house who support him that the proposal is acceptable, and that the government majority will support this amendment? If the Prime Minister will say that we will ask no more; we will accept his statement and the matter can be disposed of.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who along with his leader took strong objection to suggestions that there was something of an understanding between the government and the C.C.F. in this matter, obviously is not going to be permitted in these circumstances to pledge the government or the action of the government majority on this matter. It would be extraordinary if at this