

Business of the House

have precedence only for Thursday and Friday, and to carry forward the debate under the usual terms or following the usual procedure would require another motion, were it not for the fact that the Prime Minister has indicated that he intends to introduce a motion which would have the effect of postponing the debate on the speech from the throne.

I do not think it would be appropriate for me to make any comments on this motion in relation to the motion of which notice has been given. Nevertheless the effect of this motion is such that it would be unwise to ignore the position in which the debate on the speech from the throne is left unless the second motion is carried by the house.

While the Prime Minister may assume that he will be able to persuade a sufficient number of hon. members to produce that result by their votes, such assumption should not blind hon. members to the fact that if this motion as it now stands is carried nothing will have been done to provide for the continued debate on the speech from the throne after Friday.

I suggest that not only is this motion contrary to any motion that has been introduced in this house since confederation; it is a motion which if carried in its present form presupposes the ability of the government to carry a subsequent motion by the acceptance by members of one party of the decision of the Prime Minister without any regard to another motion. The continuance of this debate rests entirely upon that assumption, which, it seems to me, is not consistent with our parliamentary practice.

I urge the Prime Minister seriously to consider the withdrawal at this point of the motion and the substitution, which he can easily make, of the ordinary motion to the effect that the debate continue to have precedence. Then if the subsequent motion gains the support of this house the effect will be the carrying forward of the debate anyway. Such a motion would not in any way be subject to the disabilities that this motion contains.

I should like to point out that I as well as other hon. members of the house are under some handicap in debating a motion such as this because it deals with the address of His Majesty's representative. It is customary, and I believe the record will show that it has always been the practice, that the motion provide that the debate have precedence over all other government business. On those rare occasions when a subsequent motion was moved which had the effect of postponing the debate it related to the debate in the customary form and provided for the carrying forward of that debate without any such limitations as are now laid down. I again ask the Prime Minister to take this into consideration.

[Mr. Drew.]

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, I should like to support the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew). This motion, being worded as it is, does exactly what he says it does: it limits the debate to two days. It seems to me that if we pass this motion we shall be limiting ourselves to Thursday and Friday. Without notice of another motion we might find ourselves in a difficult position if the proposal of the government should not carry on Friday. In a democratic institution we have always the right to presuppose that hon. members may not always vote in accordance with the wishes of the government.

I join the leader of the opposition in suggesting that the wording of the motion be changed. We can deal with the situation as it arises on Friday, when the other motion which the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has foreshadowed can be discussed and, if the house sees fit, passed.

Mr. St. Laurent: I cannot accede to the request made by the leader of the opposition and by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) because that would be asking the house to make an order and expecting the house to reverse that order on Friday. I moved my motion in this form because I had been told by hon. members that there would be a debate upon any motion made in an attempt to postpone the debate on the address. If that were so I thought it would be preferable to have it made on Friday. I am quite prepared to agree to that.

I am prepared to state here that I am making no other assumption than the assumption that this motion provides for the order of business for two days and that a motion will have to be made on Friday for the order of business subsequent to that. If the order on Friday is not made in the terms of the motion of which I have given notice, I can move another motion for that order of business. This is merely to determine that we can go on tomorrow and Friday with the debate on the address.

Mr. Rowe: By unanimous consent.

Mr. St. Laurent: No, not by unanimous consent but by virtue of the motion I am now putting before the house. If hon. members wish to have a debate this afternoon I am quite prepared to have it. I even suggested that we should have it. However, I was told that that would not meet their convenience because other arrangements had been made for the rest of the day. It was necessary to make some provision for tomorrow and Friday.

On Friday I will move that the debate on the address be not given precedence during those days, but that precedence be given to