

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, in so far as the business for the coming days is concerned, tomorrow will be the first designated day of debate on the Speech from the Throne and it will be Leaders' day. Monday will be the second designated day of debate on the Speech from the Throne. On Tuesday we will start second reading debate on the Bill to amend the Income Tax Act that was introduced a few minutes ago, hoping that we will dispose of all stages of that Bill before the adjournment for Christmas. Wednesday will be the third designated day of debate on the Speech from the Throne. On Thursday we will resume debate on the Income Tax Act.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, that order of business is satisfactory to us. I simply want to file a caveat at this point with respect to the Government designating next Wednesday, in effect, as a government day. There seems to be a dual interpretation possible in the Provisional Standing Orders and the Standing Orders with respect to what the Throne Speech displaces and what it does not displace. We agree to the order on this occasion because Private members' business will not be ready, in any event. We simply want to flag the matter so that it does not prevent the possibility of our raising the matter should the Government attempt to use the private members' time of the House in a similar fashion on some future occasion, which I am sure the Government would not do.

● (1510)

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, the reason I am designating next Wednesday as the third designated day for debate on the Speech from the Throne is the existence of Standing Order 42(2), which provides:

Any day or days to be appointed for the consideration of the said Order shall be announced from time to time by a Minister of the Crown and on any such day or days this Order shall have precedence of all other business except the ordinary daily routine of business.

Therefore, it seems to me that there is an exception which applies only when we have a Speech from the Throne. My hon. colleague would agree that we do not abuse the Standing Order.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, there is an argument to be made, but I do not intend to make it at this time. I am simply filing a caveat. The Minister has just made one half of the argument. There is another half.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I rise on government business. I wonder if the President of the Privy Council can tell us if he intends to strike the standing committees before the Christmas adjournment and, if so, when?

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, under the Standing Orders, we do not have to strike these committees before the New Year. Under the new rules, the striking committee has to meet within ten sitting days following January 1. Therefore, the committees still exist and they can organize themselves, and I

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would hope they do so as early as possible in order to allow the committees to be working.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I am aware, of course, of what the President of the Privy Council has just said. However, it is my understanding that when a session ends the standing committees and special committees end with the session. If I am wrong, it would be pleased to be corrected.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I believe my hon. colleague should make a distinction between Parliament and a session. If he does make that distinction, he will understand it is not necessary for the striking committee to meet before January in order to allow the committees to organize themselves. Today, if need be, that can be done. The committees do not die; they can just reorganize themselves under the rules. Come the New Year, we will have to have a meeting of the striking committee in order to appoint members to the committees; but we do not have to deal with this before the New Year.

Mr. Lewycky: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the President of the Privy Council when the multiculturalism legislation will be brought forward and whether it is the Government's intention to bring it forward before Christmas. Could the President of the Privy Council also mention whether there will be a reconstituting of the special committee dealing with the participation of visible minorities in Canadian society? I believe he is aware of the fact that a lot of work has been done so far and that we are under some pressure to bring in a report.

Mr. Pinard: As the Hon. Member knows, the Government cares very much for ethnic groups, multiculturalism and visible minorities. I can assure the Hon. Member that what was said in the Speech from the Throne about multiculturalism will be taken into very serious account by the Government in its actions in the near future.

I will want to consult with the Minister responsible for the legislation before making public the date of tabling of any Bills, including the legislation which would be related to multiculturalism. Therefore, I would ask the Hon. Member not only to be patient but very confident that the Government will assume its responsibilities and make its best efforts, with the co-operation of the opposition, to allow the whole program included in the very excellent Speech from the Throne yesterday to be applied within the next weeks and months.

In so far as the committee on visible minorities is concerned, I can assure my hon. colleague that this will be done tomorrow or at the beginning of next week; very shortly.

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the President of the Privy Council about the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act which was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. The present Act discriminates against spouses. I wonder if the President of the Privy Council could tell us when that Bill will come forward for amendment and can he assure us that the Act will be made to conform to the Charter of