

Non-Confidence in Deputy Speaker

Mr. Knowles: Let us again review what happened. It is too bad that this takes time, but the day is shot anyway, so far as the budget debate is concerned.

Mr. Winkler: So is the budget.

Mr. Knowles: It is too bad that this takes time; but let us review what happened and keep some things clear. Procedurally there were two separate issues on Friday. This was why I did not want the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Martin) to confuse the two, so far as I was concerned. The first issue, procedurally, was whether the house could properly sit Friday night. I took part in the procedural argument on that point and it was my contention then, as it is my contention now, that our sitting on Friday night was legal and proper in every sense of the word. Standing order 41 makes it clear that a motion respecting the times of sitting or the time of adjournment of the house does not require notice. The motion could be voted on, could be debated; but at any rate it does not require notice. A motion was made; it passed, and we sat, properly, on Friday night. There is no question about that. I may say to the hon. member for Lapointe that he does not confuse that issue, so far as his motion is concerned, because he is not talking about the fact that we sat. But I say to him that to stand up and tell us that the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) complained or objected in the afternoon to our sitting that night has no validity, because he was still here when I pointed that standing order 41 did not require unanimous consent for a motion to sit; that it required only a motion supported by a majority of the house. If he meant it; if he did not want the house to sit on Friday night, it was his duty to stay here until that motion was put and vote against it. But no; he left and did not stay to vote on the matter. Let there be no question about it; there are two separate issues, one being the sitting and the other being something else. But so far as sitting on Friday night is concerned, it was perfectly legal and perfectly proper all the way down the line.

Mr. Gregoire: You are trying to open an open door.

Mr. Knowles: The other point is a different one, namely, was it proper for the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) to present a motion in Friday evening's sitting of which notice had not been given? Standing order 42 is quite clear; this can be done only if there is unanimous consent. Let us be honest; let us not play with words; let us not quarrel about 10 seconds, 14 seconds, or 16 seconds.

[Mr. Gregoire.]

On the part of those who were here Friday night when the motion was put, there was not unanimous consent.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: All the rest of us agreed, but there were objections by two or three hon. members at the foot of this side of the house. Let us also be honest and frank about this. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), I, and other hon. members too, were troubled about this—I was pretty unhappy here Friday night—but we sat still; we did not object even when the Deputy Speaker said to the members of the Creditiste party that they could appeal if they wanted to. We sat still. In other words, what was done by Mr. Deputy Speaker was done in the name of, with the consent of, and on the part of almost the whole house. All of us who consented in it are part of the mistake that was made, and I do not think we should try to make a scapegoat out of the Deputy Speaker and put upon him alone the mistake of all of us.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Knowles: I point out to the hon. member for Lapointe that his group did not appeal. The Deputy Speaker made it quite clear at one point, having said two or three times that he had ruled that the Prime Minister had unanimous consent, that his ruling could be appealed. I do not think the ruling was a correct one; I do not think the Prime Minister had unanimous consent, and I can tell this house that if I had been opposed to what was taking place and had wanted to register my objection, it would not have taken place, that's all; and so would it be for some other members of this house.

The fact of the matter is that after the Deputy Speaker pointed out that this was his ruling he said to the members of the Creditiste party—he said to the whole house, if you please—"You can appeal it if you wish; there is no other alternative". But no one appealed. To say that there were only three Creditiste members present is no argument at all. It takes five members to force a recorded vote, but it takes only one member to register an appeal and to ask the Speaker to put the question to the house. But that was not done. Therefore I suggest that there were quite a few mistakes on all sides of the house.

Now I want to say a word about the part of the government in this matter. It was my intention to do this earlier in my remarks, but I felt that there had been too much blaming of everybody else and that I should put the blame on all of us first. I think a good deal of the blame for what happened