

Administration of Justice

dealing with the impasse in which we are now. I want to say that very strenuous efforts have been made, by way of informal negotiations, to find what I would describe as an honourable means of disengagement from this really very damaging situation in which we are now.

Mr. Lewis: Of disinvolvement.

Mr. Fulton: I am not going to deal with those discussions. The discussions were informal and no one was committed. This, I understand, is the position. I am therefore not going to go into detail. I am simply pointing out to the house that there have been strenuous efforts made to devise means by which we could resolve our difficulty, at least for the time being, and get back to the Order Paper. Then our discussions would be at least within the ordinary routine of business.

As I said, I am not asking anyone to commit himself on how he will vote on the motion. What we have attempted to do, so far as the Conservative opposition is concerned, has been to find some means of expressing our desire for some modification of the terms of reference. We made certain proposals last evening but they were not accepted. We urge now that the matter be referred to a committee so that there can be some discussion. A 48 hour delay alone would be involved. It is possible there may be agreement. If there is not, then the government at least has the authority to go ahead.

I trust that the Prime Minister and hon. members opposite will appreciate, even although they may not agree with what we are requesting—I am not going to revive the debate so I want to choose my words carefully—that in a matter so unusual and so unprecedented, which nevertheless involves the process of making a report and passing judgment on the conduct of members of this house, surely those affected should be given the right to discuss the terms of reference under which that inquiry is going to take place and ascertain if they can be agreed upon. It is this for which we are asking.

We are asking also that we be given an opportunity now to vote on this proposal. We know—and I make no commitment, utter no threat or attach no conditions—as everyone does that this procedure cannot continue. However, we feel we must exhaust every proper means within our power of finding an acceptable method of getting out of the situation in which we now find ourselves. We

[Mr. Fulton.]

think this is a proper and sensible proposal by which that can be accomplished.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, at least the opinion of the house or the sense of the house on the question should be ascertained by allowing the motion to come to a vote. I trust, therefore, that members opposite will withdraw their objections which require you to make a ruling. I have suggested a basis upon which you may rule the motion in order. Let us see if we can at least deal with this matter in an attempt to find some way of getting back to the Order Paper and getting on with our business.

Mr. Grégoire: I should like to ask the hon. member for Kamloops a question. Suppose the house gives unanimous consent to accepting this motion, will the hon. member undertake that after the vote has been taken and the motion approved or defeated the members of his party will not pursue the debate? Will he give that undertaking?

Mr. Starr: We cannot speak for you.

Mr. Fulton: I am not in a position to give that undertaking in those words. I have said that strenuous discussions have been carried on in an effort to find an honourable means of disengagement by which we might withdraw from this process. This statement was made in all sincerity. I think that assurance should be accepted for what it is. I am not the house leader and I am not in a position to commit this party. I am confident I have expressed the sense of this party and the desire of this party if we could be allowed to deal with this motion.

Mr. Grégoire: May I ask a supplementary question? I have confidence in the word of the hon. member for Kamloops. Could he ask his house leader to give an undertaking that immediately after the vote we will be through with the discussion and not have any more speeches?

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that after the vote is taken we wish to get on with the Order Paper. I can go no further than that.

Mr. Turner: I rise on a point of order. I should like to address a few remarks to Your Honour. I want to suggest to you that if you find the motion moved by the hon. member for Edmonton West defective you will have achieved the same result by that decision. If the motion is defective and not admissible, then on the basis of the remarks made from