

Business of the House

closure and even suggested the opposition could not logically object to his doing so.

Mr. Knowles: Dared him.

Mr. Drew: I assume that the Minister of Agriculture, who is such a careful student of the press, read in the press this morning that the government was contemplating introducing the closure motion. And it certainly would not be surprising if any member had indicated that it would be an amazing thing if such a course should be followed in regard to a matter of this kind.

Mr. Gardiner: What I really did read in the press this morning, and in the Conservative press, was that the press is now convinced that the opposition are carrying on a filibuster in connection with this measure.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Drew: I am very pleased to know that the Minister of Agriculture has improved his reading habits—

Mr. Gardiner: I always read the Conservative press.

Mr. Drew: He now accepts as authoritative the statements in some of these papers which he took to task so severely in this house only a few months ago. But may I say—

Mr. Gardiner: I did not know they were in agreement with the *Gazette*.

Mr. Drew: May I say so far as the procedure in this house is concerned, that we are quite prepared to state our own position; and only the statements we make can be accepted as interpreting our position in this debate. The discussion that has taken place on this motion is simply an attempt to persuade the government to recognize the rights and duties of members of parliament, I repeat the suggestion I have made, namely that either the mover, with the concurrence of the seconder, seek the consent of the house to withdraw the motion or that the Minister of Agriculture, as the only minister now in the house, give his indication on behalf of the Liberal party that they will support the amendment. If he will do that, then we will have disposed of this and we can get on with the business of this house as expeditiously as possible, sitting through until midnight, which is the very latest we should sit. I ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he will not give that assurance. If he will, then we shall be able to get on with the business.

Mr. J. M. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the turn the debate took just a moment ago when the Minister of Agriculture stepped in with a reference to what my colleague the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming) said this

[Mr. Gardiner.]

morning. I did not understand the hon. member for Eglinton to say exactly what the Minister of Agriculture suggests. What I understood him to say was that the original motion was in effect something in the nature of closure, but I do not propose to haggle about that, because I do not imagine the Minister of Agriculture is asking us to believe that even if he is right in suggesting that the hon. member for Eglinton issued a challenge, the Prime Minister made up his mind then and there as to closure. I took the statement of the Prime Minister to refer to something which had been decided, and therefore it does not seem to me it is very relevant to attempt—if the Minister of Agriculture was doing that—to throw part of the responsibility on the hon. member for Eglinton. I am not so sure that the minister would object; nevertheless one would like to believe—and until I am forced to take a different view I will believe—that an important decision of this kind, which I think is of tremendous importance, was not made in that offhand manner.

Now that I am on my feet I should like to say a little more about the situation that faces us. I feel that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough) is a sensible and co-operative one. It is an amendment which shows that we do wish to go half-way or a good deal more than half-way from our point of view. The fact is that neither the mover and seconder nor the government have made any observation on this offer, but gentlemen opposite have said no with much more alacrity than the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I have been looking at the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), nearly all of whose utterances in this house I regard with great respect, and I have been allowing myself to believe—although I am not a mind reader—that perhaps if he had all this to do over again, he would not do it. But be that as it may.

At the present time the situation is that we have made a suggestion to extend the time for two hours, and that suggestion apparently is going to be rejected. There is another point I should like to refer to. I was interested when the minister for Winnipeg North Centre—

Mr. Knowles: Member.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I am sorry—"member"—said, "You must now accept this situation because of what the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has said, and because of the threat which you now know you face." Apparently the argument is that with this threat before us—and I shall come back to that in a moment—we must just run away in panic, and do what we are told.