

Business of the House

find that, according to our rules, the Speaker of the house here is entitled to adjourn the house at six o'clock on a Wednesday and at eleven o'clock on other days, without question put. But if the sitting day runs beyond eleven o'clock, would it not be essential, prior to bringing that sitting to a close sometime tomorrow, that a motion be made for adjournment of the house? Would such a motion not be required?

According to the British practice, as given in the latest edition of Erskine May, 1950, at page 308, I notice that if a sitting on any day should be prolonged beyond the hour of meeting on the following day—that is, if the sitting of this house should go on beyond eleven o'clock tomorrow morning—no independent sitting can take place on that day, and the house rises when it has disposed of the business of the sitting prolonged from the previous day. Erskine May gives some examples. He says that the house was prevented from meeting on Wednesday, July 20, 1904; and he gives subsequent examples, the latest being July 23, 1937.

I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, whether a similar situation would arise here in this house, but I should be pleased to be informed on the subject. If it should be that the practice of this house would follow that British practice, and if we should be in continuous session throughout today, this evening, during the night and tomorrow morning, it seems to me that we would go on indefinitely unless someone moved the adjournment of the house, which might then prevent the proper sitting of the house on Friday. That is a matter on which you, sir, might be able to enlighten hon. members of the house.

Mr. Knowles: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Churchill: Yes.

Mr. Knowles: Just for the purpose of giving a bit of information, I wonder if the hon. member is aware of the fact that in this house in 1896, when the house was debating the Manitoba school issue, the sitting which began at three o'clock one Monday afternoon did not conclude until two a.m. the following Friday, according to the record. Yes, it went from three o'clock Monday until two a.m. the following Friday, and according to the records—both the *Journals* and *Hansard*—it was counted as one day's sitting. The point I am trying to convey to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) is that if the continuation of one day's sitting interfered with a formal new sitting of the house on those subsequent calendar days, the

[Mr. Churchill.]

right to discuss the matter at hand was not interfered with at all. The house continued to sit night and day.

Mr. Churchill: I am grateful to my hon. friend and neighbour for enlightening me on this matter. That is just what I fear, namely that we may be in continuous session from now until we reach the conclusion of the matters on the order paper. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), for whom I have the greatest admiration, and who is recognized in our part of the country as an experienced authority on parliamentary procedure, has, I confess, disappointed me on this occasion, because I have always looked upon him as a stout defender of the rights of minority groups and of the opposition in this house. I was hoping that in another issue which may confront us shortly I would find some of his stalwart support behind me in a matter on which I feel very keenly. This is perhaps only one single solitary lapse from grace, and I am not going to condemn him outright on this occasion, because his reputation as a defender of the rights of minorities has been pretty thoroughly established, and I feel sure that once we get over the Christmas season he will be back on the side of right again.

You see what is ahead of us. If my hon. friend's motion should carry and our amendment is not found satisfactory we will sit here continuously until, I presume, we complete all the matters on the order paper, and that will be a good test of endurance. I do not mind a test of endurance. I think there are other hon. members here who are quite equal to facing up to it. But will our journey be really necessary through the long hours of the night? It seems to me that this incident here in the House of Commons points out very clearly the crisis that is showing up in our parliamentary life. We have been faced here with a tremendous majority on the government benches and a small number on the opposition side. Under these circumstances there is always the danger that the majority will on occasion become rather impatient with the small number facing them, and wish to hurry along with the business. But in the long course of the history of our parliaments there have been occasions when those who have been on the side of the Speaker have, in course of time, found themselves on the other side, and then they looked to the rules and the procedure and the established forms in the House of Commons to protect their interests. That is the reason why the rules, established over the centuries with regard to parliament, have