

Motion to Extend Hours of Sitting

moving the motion at this time was largely with the view that there would probably be limited discussion on it in view of the discussions which have already been held. I think it is perfectly correct under the rules that we entertain at this time a procedural motion before other matters are proceeded with. The point made by the Leader of the Opposition is one which probably deserves some further consideration in due course, but at this time I think the motion should be put so that we can proceed with the extended hours.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, this motion has been brought forward today, an opposition day, and I can only reiterate my fundamental objection to this being done today in light of the representations made by the Leader of the Opposition and other speakers. In my view it is not only contrary to the spirit but to the letter of Standing Order 58(12) which, if the matter requires any further elaboration, reads as follows:

On any day or days appointed for the consideration of any business under the provisions of this Standing Order—

This deals entirely with supply.

—that order of business shall have precedence over all other government business in such sitting or sittings.

● (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, this motion for accelerated sittings is nothing but government business. It is a government motion. It is not one from the opposition in any way. The Minister without Portfolio from Saskatoon-Humboldt may purse his lips in disapproval all he wants. This is strictly a government proposal. In light of the circumstances, I object to this being done on an opposition day near the end of the session.

The government can use what happens today as a precedent on some future occasion to bring in a similar motion dealing with House business, which may be controversial or otherwise and which will eat into the rights of the opposition. It is not a question of quantum. I dismiss with contempt any suggestion that if the Opposition wants time to discuss its business, this order provides for an additional hour for that to be done. That is a red herring, Mr. Speaker, because this need not apply in the future. It is a question of what type of business the government can bring forward on an opposition day. This is our day, if I may say so as a member of the

opposition and as a member of the procedure committee. I recall all the great statements, the professions of good faith and so on, members speaking on behalf of the government when Standing Order 58 was brought in.

I have no objection to the extended sittings but I have a fundamental objection to the motion to extend the hours being brought forward today. Hon. members may have all sorts of arguments about the merit of extended sittings. I must say, however, that I object fundamentally to the government choosing this particular occasion to bring forward this motion. I say, finally, that it is quite contrary not only to the spirit but to the letter of Standing Order 58(12) to do so and therefore should not be allowed by Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for York South rising on the point of order?

Mr. Lewis: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that we really ought not to pursue the procedural aspect of the matter much longer. However, if the hon. member thinks he has a valid and valuable contribution to make, we will hear him.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I hope it is both, Mr. Speaker. All I want to say is that there is no need to indulge in lengthy argument. If the President of the Privy Council would either assure the House or amend his motion so that it would not apply to today, the whole problem would disappear and we would not need to take any more time on this procedural argument.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I quite agree to that change. Therefore the motion would be effective as of tomorrow.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, with due respect, this is not my point.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I quite agree with the Leader of the Opposition. That is not his point and that is certainly not the way I understood his argument. His argument is based more on a question of principle and propriety and, as the hon. member for Edmonton West said, the matter of an hour's gain or an hour's loss is not necessarily the substance of the argument which has been proposed by the Leader of the Opposition in opposition to the motion.