

Business of the House

Can he also tell the House when it is the intention of the government to give notice of the bill with respect to the Post Office becoming a Crown corporation? I ask that question because there was some discussion that the notice might have been given last Friday.

I have had some discussions, and it would be in order if the Deputy Prime Minister wished to make a reference of the commodity tax review to the appropriate committee. I understand that there are a large number of briefs and that that reference could be made without debate.

I notice that the Bank Act legislation is on the order paper. I assume that that will be called quickly, and if it is the intention of the government to refer the subject matter of that bill—and I emphasize the words “subject matter”—to the appropriate standing committee, as far as our party is concerned that reference could be made without debate.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, the supplementary estimates have been approved, and it is my expectation that it will be possible to bring them into the House next week.

The date of the budget is not settled. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) has indicated that it will be sometime in the middle of November, and I cannot add any precision to that.

I should tell the hon. member that it is not likely that I will be able to introduce the bill establishing a Crown corporation with respect to the Post Office at the time I indicated earlier. The reason for that is that the postal unions have requested consultations with respect to the bill. Just as soon as those consultations have been completed it will be possible for me to introduce that bill for first reading.

With respect to the revisions to the Bank Act, I hope that bill will be given first reading today and that we can send the subject matter to committee without debate. I will give further consideration to the question of sending the commodity tax matter to the appropriate standing committee. That committee is quite busy, and we will have to decide which takes priority, the Bank Act or the commodity tax matter. However, we can work that out.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I assume that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) will be available for the Committee of the Whole discussions later this afternoon. He was not in the House earlier today, but I presume he will be available to discuss tax matters relating to Bill C-10 which deals with family allowances.

The Deputy Prime Minister mentioned the Post Office legislation. It occurred to me that there was a representation made by the government that it would bring in legislation of an omnibus nature with respect to Crown corporations. Is it the intention of the government to bring in that kind of legislation with the Post Office legislation at the same time, so that they can be compared? There may be special considerations in the Post Office legislation which might not apply generally. On the other hand, is it the intention to bring in the Post Office bill in isolation? Has the government considered

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

that? Perhaps my friend can answer the question today because it is quite important, I think.

● (1522)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we seem to be reviewing the matters which we discussed earlier today at a meeting of the House leaders, so I can say that in so far as an agreement to certain points has been expressed, we join in that agreement. Specifically, if there is a desire to refer the subject matter of the bill to amend the Bank Act to committee without prior debate, we would be prepared to go along with that. I emphasize, as did my friend, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), that that motion, to be treated that way, must be a motion to refer the subject matter, not the bill.

I may say also that if there is a desire, as expressed some time ago by the government House leader, to move on the bill respecting the independence of parliament, we would be prepared to agree to a one-speaker per party debate at the second reading of that bill so that it too could get to committee at an early date.

I have just one other request to make, and again it is something that we discussed at the meeting earlier today. In view of the gross misrepresentation by the press with respect to Bill C-12, the one affecting the indexing of certain pensions, particularly those of retired public servants, I wonder if the government House leader would consider bringing that bill forward reasonably soon so that in public debate here on the floor of the House we could make its provisions clear.

[Translation]

Mr. Allard: Mr. Speaker, my question follows the same line. I would like to ask the leader of the government whether he intends, during this session, to bring back before the House the bill which was introduced last April 5 and which deals with the creation of the office of ombudsman in Canada.

[English]

Mr. Symes: Following the same point of order raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) on future House business, may I say, Mr. Speaker, that I notice as the first item of government business there is a motion which I moved under Standing Order 43 last Thursday, which unfortunately was not disposed of by the House. I realize, of course, that the motion asked the House to declare October 26 as Arts Day. We are now after the fact, nevertheless the debate on that motion had begun and we did not have time to complete it. In view of what I know is the long-standing desire of the House leader that fairness should prevail in this place, and that all parties should be able to express an opinion on the motion I moved, I wonder if he could inform us when he will call that motion for final debate and resolution.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I will consider the representations made by the hon. member with respect to his motion and, if we can make good progress on other government business, I might bring it forward.