

Business of the House

more important legislation at an earlier stage in the session. I was amazed at the devious treatment of this legislation on resale price maintenance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I think he should confine his remarks to the matter under discussion.

Mr. Dinsdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall try to stick as closely as possible to the point.

We have been led to the present impasse because of the delay to which I have referred which has necessitated the debate this afternoon and the amendment to which I am speaking at the present moment. I am told the impasse that has resulted from the delay is not a new situation, but that it recurs repeatedly session after session. I am rather proud to be a member of this house at this time, particularly a member of the official opposition taking a stand against these tactics. With regard to the amendment, it seems a reasonable approach to the problem. We have been forced into the situation where we are gradually being prevented from debating adequately the remaining legislation because of the lack of time and because of the pressure of the approaching Christmas season. Along with other members of the official opposition, I am disappointed that we have not the support of the other minority groups in the house, the C.C.F. and the Social Credit parties, at this time because a fundamental principle is at stake here. Being a small number of members, we are faced with an almost impossible situation. It looks as if we are going to be down to something like thirty to carry on this debate, on the important legislation before us, in a continuous marathon without any opportunity for rest or respite. As has been pointed out, it seems hardly a logical and reasonable approach to the problem.

A suggestion has been put forward that we should delay consideration of the legislation perhaps until the next session, when the whole matter could be discussed intelligently and reasonably. Then we have the alternative in the amendment before the house, and I think it is a reasonable one. The very fact that we have been sitting continuously and have had morning sittings all this week and for a part of last week has reduced a good many of the members to the point of exhaustion. Some have already left the struggle and gone home. I, as a member who has to go some considerable distance to get back for Christmas, can appreciate their desire to get away; but I considered it of sufficient importance to remain behind and take a

stand on these issues that I have endeavoured to outline in these few remarks this afternoon. The opposition has not collapsed. I say that the opposition, in its stand during this debate, has contributed something to good government in this country and to the preservation of democratic parliamentary procedure. It has pointed the way to the time when there will be an alternative to the present administration.

(Translation):

Mr. Henri Courtemanche (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, I wish to add a few words in support of the amendment before the house.

I am wondering if the opposition should be criticized for its present stand. Our duty is to consider and to discuss legislation freely. Is it the opposition's fault if the government is asking us, at the very last moment, to agree to a bill of prime importance? And yet on certain days we have had to adjourn a little earlier than the limit set by standing orders because of lack of work. Today, on the eve of the Christmas holidays, I understand that certain members who have not the chance or the privilege to live as close to parliament as some others, should like to leave immediately for their home. I understand all that. But that is no reason to jam through the house a bill that requires serious consideration.

The standing orders have been approved after serious consideration. We have set reasonable hours of sitting. We are now asked to sit until disgraceful hours. Why should members of this house, regardless of party, have to put in longer hours than anyone else? With our backs to the wall we are being forced, by a majority, to approve this legislation against resale price maintenance, without proper time to discuss it. What does it mean?

Mr. Lesage: On a point of order. I would like to know what bearing the hon. member's remarks have on the motion to extend sitting hours from ten to twelve tonight? We are now debating the amendment moved by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough). The debate has nothing to do with the motion moved by the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) or with resale price legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought the hon. member was just expressing his opening remarks; I would ask him to return to the matter at hand as soon as possible.