

Old Age and Veterans' Pensions

is enter a caveat; that he does not object to the House proceeding today with this motion. I am afraid I must enter the counter caveat that the rule does not say that all non-confidence motions are the prerogative of the official opposition.

It is true that all the non-confidence motions moved since the new rules came into effect have been in the names of hon. members of the official opposition. We have contended both last session and this session that in view of the relative size of our party compared with that of the official opposition we should be entitled to at least one of the six in the course of each session. We have endeavoured to arrive at this understanding by agreement, but agreement has not been possible and, this day having been assigned to us, it being the last of the six in this session, it seems to me it is our right to ask that this motion of ours be one of non-confidence.

As the hon. member who has just spoken knows, I made it clear to his party on Friday morning that it was our intention to file this motion and ask that it be one of non-confidence. While I am prepared to take part in further discussions, I enter this present statement as a counter caveat to the caveat put on record by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken).

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): In order to make the government's position clear, may I say that the practice followed has been for myself, as leader of the House, or my representative from time to time to indicate which of the sitting days should be considered as an allotted day for the purpose of Standing Order 58. I have not assumed responsibility for deciding which of the days should be taken up by which of the opposition parties, nor which of the days was to be regarded as a day for putting forward a motion of non-confidence. On this basis, I was not privy to discussions regarding the use to be made of the day between hon. members opposite. I merely gave an indication that Monday would be an allotted day.

It might be of some assistance in this regard if Your Honour could indicate whether, in your view, this motion does in fact constitute a motion of non-confidence or not. In itself, the wording might just commend itself to some of my hon. friends on this side of the House. But, of course, they would not feel obliged to vote for it if the effect would be to cut the government's throat. So it might be useful if Your Honour could rule whether

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

or not a motion purporting to be under the terms of Standing Order 58 (9), while not expressing in its terms any want of confidence in the government should be regarded as a motion under that part of the Standing Order or whether, rather, it should be regarded as a motion under Standing Order 58 (11) which is the one providing for motions other than non-confidence motions, motions in connection with which debate would expire at ten o'clock rather than be put to the vote.

Subject to this reservation, the government takes no position one way or another on the point of order. Nevertheless, if these questions are to mean anything, if they are to be the occasion for more than a ritualistic battle, it would seem to me that non-confidence motions should be expressed in such a way as clearly to indicate non-confidence in the government. The feeling among some of my hon. friends might be that the motion before us does not fall into this category.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I should address myself first to the point raised initially by the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) about which a caveat, a counter caveat and a non-caveat have been entered by the three hon. members who took part in the discussion.

I doubt very much that the Chair could intervene in this aspect of the proceedings. Obviously, the only way in which the Standing Order can be operated so as to work and make sense is to have agreement between hon. members, in this case between representatives of the parties in the House. As has been pointed out, there has been no such agreement in this case, and the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) on behalf of his party has presented a motion under the terms of Standing Order 58(9). The only role assigned to the Chair in this respect relates to Standing Order 58(4) (b) which states:

When notice has been given of two or more motions by members in opposition to the government for consideration on an allotted day, Mr. Speaker shall have power to select which of the proposed motions shall have precedence in that sitting.

Had there been more than one motion filed within the required time under the terms of Standing Order 58(9), the Chair would have had the responsibility of determining which took precedence—the motion sponsored by the Official Opposition or the motion sponsored by another party in the House. In this case I suggest I cannot go beyond what I have