

Veterans Affairs

the debate is still going, the motion then is transferred to government orders and is not called again unless the government wants to call it. This does not worry me greatly, Mr. Speaker. I think if we can have a full day's debate so members can express themselves on this, it will strengthen our case for these veterans and it will strengthen the hand of the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

Let me say quite frankly that there is one thing the government can do, but which I hope with all my heart it will not do.

An hon. Member: Don't say it, or they will.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The government could put someone up to move the adjournment of the debate and, of course, with its majority it would carry that motion and thus cut off the discussion. I hope the government will not do that. I am sure the discussion on Bill C-41, which was slated as the first item of government business today and which has been around for several years, can wait for another day.

Mr. Sharp: We will make a deal right now.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The government House leader is offering a deal. What is it?

Mr. Sharp: We will put both things through tonight. We will give you the day, if you will give us Bill C-41 without debate.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Oh, no.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): What a shameful play on the backs of the veterans.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I realize that remarks made by a member from his seat are not supposed to be put in *Hansard*, but I hope those remarks are. The President of the Privy Council is prepared to hold the veterans at bay, depending on what we do with Bill C-41. Surely this motion stands on its own feet. The minister says they are prepared to give us the day, but that is not giving us the bill. I plead that the government have the decency to let parliament debate this all day. In case the government is not willing to do so, I would make this request to you, sir. I have already communicated to the Speaker, as has been indicated, that the seconder of this motion is the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand, one of the members of the Conservative party with a very good name.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I hope you will see that hon. member next so that his case can be made, and I would hope that you might also see the hon. member for Rimouski, so the entire opposition case can be heard before the government could be in a position to move the adjournment of the debate.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Mr. Boulanger: How do you know they are going to do that?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member for Mercier asks me how I know they are going to do that. I do not know that and I hope my friend's question implies that the government will not do that. I appeal to the government to have the decency to let this debate go all day so that members in all parts of the House can express their views. That is the purpose of this procedure. This is what parliament is all about. Parliament cannot spend money and cannot enact legislation on its own initiative. Parliament is at the will of the government. But parliament can speak, and parliament can debate, and that is what we are doing today.

I plead, sir, that the government allow this debate to go all day so the views of all members can be expressed. Once again I thank the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand for seconding the motion. I thank my friend, the hon. member for Rimouski, for his offer to support it as well, and I am grateful to those unnamed members on the other side who I know agree with us. I am sure they are just as keen as I am that this legislation be brought in. We have waited far too long. We are talking about persons who have been suffering for decades because of their experience as prisoners of war. We have a responsible proposal before us and the restraint program should not touch it at all. I call for action right away to bring on the legislation to provide pensions for these former prisoners of war that are proposed in our report, and also to enact the improvements in widows' pensions set out in our report of June 12. It is an excellent report. It has the unanimous support of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs and it deserves the unanimous support of this House and immediate action by the government.

● (1550)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Before I call upon another hon. member, I want the House to know that I do not wish to leave the impression, by recognizing that hon. member, that the Chair is taking any direction from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I wish to advise hon. members that the matter was considered by the Chair this morning. The possibility of the minister rising at this time has been considered.

I have looked at the Standing Orders and also the written precedents concerning the recognition of alternate speakers on one side or the other. On February 17, 1975, there was a motion by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). There was another motion on April 11, 1973, by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald), and on September 17, 1973, again a motion by the hon. member for St. John's East. In such cases it has been the decision of the Chair to give an opportunity first to the seconder of the motion to participate in the debate, and then if anyone from the other parties seeks the floor, to recognize that member.

Of course, this might bring some disappointment to the minister who might wish to express his view early in the debate. I know this report of the committee is a unanimous report and the minister might be anxious perhaps to support the report, I do not know, before any other member rises in criticism of him or the government. I understand