

*Business of the House*

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** I just wish to say again that the motion made this morning seems to me to be, in spite of its innocent appearance of merely referring to the times of meeting and times of adjourning, in contradiction to the very basic rights that we have. It is for that reason I shall have to vote for the amendment.

**Mr. Gordon Churchill (Winnipeg North Centre):** We have had two propositions put before us. There is a motion by the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that the house shall sit continuously, and an amendment on the part of the official opposition that instead of sitting continuously the time might be extended for this day. The hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming) has indicated that so far as the official opposition is concerned any reasonable extension of the hours of sitting for this day would be considered. But to suggest that the house must sit without intermission is astounding. It might be defended in a case of national emergency, but there is no national emergency facing us at the present time. It might be defended on some other grounds, but we have had no adequate reason presented to us for indefinitely prolonging the hours of sitting.

We have had suggestions put forward that in the interests of the staff of this institution the matter should be brought to a conclusion. Yet at the same time the suggestion is made to indefinitely extend the hours of sitting which would impose a serious extra burden upon the staff. That does not make sense. Several times in the course of the last few days it has been suggested to us that the Christmas season is approaching and the business of the house should be wound up quickly. It would be pleasant and interesting to have a normal Christmas; but obviously those who live at a distance from this city will be seriously inconvenienced this year. We have had held in the background over our heads the suggestion that we may have to reassemble immediately after Christmas, an event which means that people living at a distance from Ottawa will have to leave their homes on Christmas day or before Christmas day. I confess to surprise that there should be such a complete disregard of the interests of the people west and east of this city. As a matter of fact, I am prepared to leave on Christmas evening and come back here, if that is the determination of this house, or I am prepared to miss Christmas entirely. It will not be the first time in my life that I have not had Christmas at home. But I think such a course of action should be founded upon some greater reason than we have had presented to us here.

Why the haste? Why try to rush through the business of this house in a short interval? Why has there not been a more orderly arrangement of the business of the house? These are thoughts that go through a person's mind when he considers the possibilities that are ahead of us. As a representative of the people and as a student of the parliamentary system for a period of years, I think that this is a rather unfortunate example of the disregard of the prestige of parliament and of the rights of minorities within parliament. In the history of a parliamentary institution there may be occasions when extreme measures must be taken to force legislation through. There have been examples in the past when apparently merely obstructionist methods have been followed and it has been essential for the government to impose closure in order to force its measure through the house. But on this particular occasion we are not faced with that situation. We have been having a reasonable debate on the various issues presented to us. We have still facing us a heavy order paper containing matters which require careful and serious consideration. We should be given an opportunity to debate those matters carefully and with the attention they deserve. The thing that I find regrettable is the fact that some of the most important and most contentious measures facing the house this session should be brought to our attention at so late a stage, and should then be put before us with the suggestion: If you want to be home for Christmas, let us pass this legislation; be a rubber stamp; let it go through; fold up and go home.

I am happy to see that the opposition is properly standing its ground on this occasion and is asserting the rights of free men in a free society, namely that their voice may be heard and that the opinions of the people they represent may be presented here on the floor of the House of Commons.

If this amendment which has been put forward by the official opposition is not carried and if the motion which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has presented to us is carried by the house, we will then apparently be in continuous session. I was interested in an opinion that was expressed by Your Honour this morning, to the effect that if this particular sitting ran over into tomorrow you would, prior to eleven o'clock in the morning, adjourn the house and that it would then reassemble for the next sitting at eleven. I should be pleased to be informed as to how that can be done. I have not sufficient experience on some of these matters, but I have been looking into the rules of the house and consulting the rules of the British House of Commons. I