

mistake to take on additional person-years and bloat the public service without first knowing exactly where we are going.

**An hon. Member:** Enough.

**Mr. Johnston:** We should know that in a very few months.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### WEEKLY STATEMENT

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, could I ask the government House leader to tell us the legislative intentions of the government for today, tomorrow and into next week?

**Mr. Pinard:** Madam Speaker, today we will go on with the debate on the Constitution and conclude five months of debate. Tomorrow we will deal with Bill C-55, the Canada Student Loans Act amendment, through all the stages. Then we will deal with Bill C-34 and with the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport. If we have any time left, we will start debate, and if possible conclude it, on Bill C-58, the Canada Elections Act.

[*Translation*]

Next Monday, Madam Speaker, will be an allotted day, and I understand that the New Democratic Party will sponsor the motion. Then on Tuesday, we shall resume debate on the Constitution. We shall thus begin the sixth month of debate on the resolution and the constitutional issue. Wednesday morning the President of the United States will address the House at 11 a.m. Since we expect everything to be over around 12 noon, this will not affect our regular sitting hours. We shall, therefore, sit as usual on Wednesday and, of course, the following day. Next week, Madam Speaker, after Monday, the constitutional issue will again come before the House.

[*English*]

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** I want to thank the government House leader. It is because of our desire to ensure that there is adequate time for all hon. members to speak on the Constitution debate that we are agreeable to putting some legislation through quickly, legislation which could have gone to Committee of the Whole, and send it to committees of the House. We are agreeable, for instance in respect of Bill C-55, to go through all three stages, and we are agreeable generally to the program that the government House leader has outlined because we want to reserve as much House time as we can for that portion of business which the government obviously regards as the most important, namely, the Constitution.

I want to ask the government House leader about one other bill which we discussed, and that is Bill C-60 respecting the National Energy Board Act. There had been a discussion with respect to that bill and the government was to consider its position on the bill. Has my friend had an opportunity to do so?

### *Business of the House*

While I am on my feet, Madam Speaker, I should like to have it confirmed that the agreement has been that next Monday will be an NDP allotted day. I hope they will bring up the matter of the price gouging by the oil companies because we look forward to participating in that debate.

**Mr. Pinard:** Madam Speaker, with regard to the last part of the question concerning Bill C-60, I have not had the opportunity to discuss the matter with the minister responsible. I will speak to him and I will try to bring the bill in front of the House as soon as possible.

My colleague mentioned his desire to allow more members to speak in the Constitution debate. I agree with him on the importance of that debate and if he wishes to accept my proposal that the length of speeches be reduced to 20 minutes and that we sit additional hours, I hereby make that offer to him. I propose that we reduce the length of speeches to 20 minutes and that we allow the House to sit from six to ten additional hours a week, thus allowing more members to participate. If my colleague is serious and sincere in his desire to allow more members to participate in the debate, he will accept my proposal. In fact, I understand—and this has been made public in the House—that two or three weeks ago when we resumed debate on the Constitution his party refused additional hours of sittings.

Since he has mentioned today, three weeks after that refusal, that he wishes more members to participate in the debate, I am willing to oblige him and I hereby once again make the formal offer that speeches be reduced in length to 20 minutes. If my colleague wishes to settle for 25 minutes, I will agree to any length of time below the unacceptable 40-minute time limit which deprives many members from participating, not only in the Constitution debate but when debating any government bill. Because of the large number of members in the House, 40-minute speeches have become unacceptable. That is why I make what I believe to be a reasonable offer. Also, if my colleague wishes the House to sit during meal hours from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and even from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on these days, we are willing to agree to that.

I think the NDP should also be seized of this offer which I am making formally at this stage. If the official opposition House leader, who just now mentioned his desire to allow more hon. members to participate in the Constitution debate, is serious in what he says, he will accept, if not the total, then part of this generous offer.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, my friend's generosity is overwhelming and I want to thank him. I want to say that I have been following the course of the debate very carefully and I want to thank the government for its forbearance in putting up only one speaker a day for about 20 minutes—

**An hon. Member:** Two speakers.