

Business of the House

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker. There can be no agreement on that matter. What we are being asked to do now by the government is to listen to the Minister of Finance for two hours or two and a half hours and immediately thereafter take up our time to reply to the minister without any intervening period at all, even of one day. The Prime Minister knows perfectly well that has never been done in the past.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: The hon. member for Greenwood knows that when the budget debate was postponed after he made a short reply, that was done by agreement. We asked that the government follow the same course this time. I am sure my hon. friend will agree with me that was the course that was followed in the past.

Mr. Macdonnell: I said previously this evening that the practice when I acted as financial critic was that I followed the minister of finance and that I used such time as I wished that same evening, usually not more than 15 minutes.

Mr. Chevrier: That is right.

Mr. Macdonnell: Then I adjourned the debate and it was not resumed usually for several days.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): But you were, of course, allowed to make your speech.

Mr. Pearson: Was it not done by agreement? Is it not the case that the debate was resumed, with his knowledge and approval by agreement? I ask the hon. member whether that is not the case.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chevrier: Will the hon. member for Greenwood answer the question?

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that a question has been asked and I have no objection to its being answered. However, if the house is not in agreement, nothing can be accomplished by debate.

Mr. Chevrier: The hon. member should be given an opportunity to reply.

Mr. Speaker: The only course to be followed is to deal with the situation when it arises. As far as I can see, there is no agreement about what may be done at ten o'clock tomorrow night. The house will have to decide that matter then. It being ten o'clock this house stands adjourned until 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Mr. Pickersgill: Arrogance.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I raised this question on the orders of the day, Mr. Speaker. You had suggested that the appropriate moment to raise this order of business—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If Your Honour will permit me to say so, when I raised this matter on the orders of the day you had suggested that the appropriate time at which to raise it was at this hour. That has been done. We are now discussing the procedure. There has been no agreement. On the eve of the dissolution of parliament we are trying to see to it that at the least, one privilege is given to the opposition, namely that the Leader of the Opposition not only be allowed to begin his speech tomorrow but that, before this house is dissolved, he be given the opportunity to complete his statement with regard to the budget brought in by this government. To deny us this right will be something that the people of Canada will observe.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was ten o'clock. However, I would say to the hon. gentleman that he should recall January of 1940 when he starts telling us what should be done. He should remember what was done then. It is ten o'clock.

Mr. Pearson: I think it should be recorded that when I made—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: Another form of closure.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would the Leader of the Opposition resume his seat. If the house is concerned about making an arrangement I am content to hear more, but I do not think I can allow a debate to continue which is not leading somewhere in the discussion of the business of the house. It was proposed, as I understood it, to allow sufficient time that the opposition could make an interim reply after tomorrow night's budget speech, and if the house is prepared to agree to a time of 20 minutes or half an hour beyond the conclusion of the budget address the matter can be dealt with. Otherwise it will have to be dealt with tomorrow when the occasion arises.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I am merely suggesting that the ordinary, normal, courteous course be followed which was followed by the hon. member for Greenwood, and when I outlined what that course was he nodded his head in assent. I hope it will be followed on this occasion.

Mr. Monteith (Perth): It is always followed.