

Extension of Sittings

What should we be doing today, Mr. Speaker? I suggest that in the next 10, 15, 20 or 30 minutes or the next hour we should vote on the motion to set our timetable in place for next week. That is an option. We can do it in an hour. We can do it at 1 a.m. We can debate this motion for the next 12 hours or we can vote and we can work co-operatively. The minute we vote we could agree—and the Government is quite willing to agree—that we get on with the debate on free trade. We can set aside our quorum rules. We can set aside the possibility of votes. We can simply not see the clock until 1 a.m. and get our free trade speeches started today. Let us go to 1 a.m. If people want to go until 2 a.m., Government Members are agreeable to that. Why not start debating free trade today?

What is the logic of spending 12 more hours and \$1 million debating the procedural motion? Surely Canadians are tired of our procedural motions, the little internal games. This is an issue of substance on which we have strong feelings. My feelings are probably different from a number of people on the other side.

An Hon. Member: And just as strong.

Mr. Hawkes: And just as strongly held. We should be using this Chamber in the finest democratic tradition to get our feelings and our thoughts out on the table. Why 12 hours? That is the equivalent of three parliamentary days of debating time. It is the equivalent of \$3 million that we can spend on procedural speeches or we could agree co-operatively to spend that time on substantive speeches about the issue of concern to Canadians.

What choice will be made, Mr. Speaker? Our choice is clear. Members on this side of the House would prefer to talk about substance. We will probably talk about opportunity. Almost all our Members would have that characteristic. I suspect the Opposition will talk about their perception of what the problems might be. If we are going to spend \$3 million worth of taxpayers money today, surely we should spend it on that debate.

According to the rules of the House the only way we can get there now is to vote as quickly as possible, set in place our timetable for next week and reach an agreement co-operatively to set aside our rules and get to the debate. So that we can make sure we do it in an orderly manner, I would like to move an amendment to the motion and, once that amendment is in place, the first vote would be on the amendment. It is in line with the agreement that we reached co-operatively yesterday afternoon.

There should be no need for a standing vote. We could pass this with a voice vote. Then we could have our standing vote, agree not to see the clock, agree not to call quorum and have no votes for the rest of the day. We could have a lot of speeches on free trade between now and 1 a.m. We could quit a little sooner if people wanted and commence on Monday morning with more speeches on second reading. Therefore, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis (Mr. Layton):

That the motion be amended by deleting in the penultimate paragraph the words "all such Bills" and inserting in lieu thereof the words "That Bill C-2

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want first to acknowledge your presence in the chair and say that once again it is a pleasure to have your smiling visage and, even though you are not conditioned by Bill 101, it is nice to have you back in the House looking after these affairs.

I want to acknowledge that the amendment just introduced is an amendment that was proposed by our House Leader as a way of bailing the Government out of a situation of total and complete chaos in which it found itself. Obviously our willingness to support it would be more than apparent.

An Hon. Member: Why not vote?

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): I found the remarks that introduced the amendment to be most illuminating about the density by which the Parliamentary Secretary thinks about Parliament. I have here the questions he posed. Why are we here, he said? Why are we debating this motion? Why are we looking at questions of procedure as if Parliament were some kind of a sausage machine where the Hon. Member and his Ministers simply turn on the crank and churn out the legislation according to some kind of mechanical, automatic computer-like dictate without the full requirement of the Canadian people through their elected representatives to be heard.

It was an interesting commentary on the way in which Parliament is viewed by Members on the other side. This is not a place, in their view, where Members of Parliament duly elected by their constituents will have an opportunity to present their case, to have an exchange, a dialogue, to try to influence legislation or to make sure that the public can be heard in open committee hearings.