

give hon. members more time to review the resolution, if we proceed in that manner.

In so far as the word-for-word formulation of the resolution is concerned, obviously, since it is a straight resolution, we will try to respect as much as possible the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada, which worked very hard and which deserves our congratulations.

Finally, the Tory House leader wishes me to designate Tuesday, February 24 as an allotted day now, but I am not in a position to do so. I will look into the hon. member's request and perhaps I could give formal notice next Thursday. I will try to inform the hon. member verbally in advance at the beginning of next week. First, I would like to review the list since I have not seen it.

● (1510)

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, the President of the Privy Council has answered most of the questions that I had in mind. Perhaps he answered this one and I missed it. When the debate on the Constitution starts on Tuesday, is it the intention of the government to stay with it until that debate is over, or are there matters for which that debate might have to be interrupted?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, taking into consideration our large workload, I should like to keep the flexibility perhaps to deal, once in a while, with legislation on which we could get agreement to send it to committee or to approve it through all stages, with a very short delay.

At this stage I should not like to commit myself to dealing with this debate five days a week. I cannot confirm it today, but it is our intention to ensure that the next days and weeks are devoted mainly—and I would say almost 100 per cent—to the debate on the Constitution. But I want to keep the flexibility to once in a while allot a day, because we must allot days for the opposition during that period of time, or perhaps to deal with other business of the House on which we could reach agreement.

Finally, I think it would be very useful, following the question of the hon. member for Jonquière, if I make the offer formally now of reducing the length of speeches to 20 minutes, as compared to 40 minutes, and of extending the sitting hours by ten hours a week. The purpose of this proposal is simply to allow additional members to participate. After the four months we have spent on the subject in committee and in the House—

Mr. Crosbie: Nonsense.

Mr. Pinard: —I am sure it will be easier—and everyone will understand that it will be fair—if we sit longer hours and reduce the very long, unacceptable 40 minutes in 1981 when there are 282 members in the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I find it really quite strange. First, I thought the question of the hon.

Business of the House

member for Jonquière was most unusual for my friend. It was kind of negotiating or forcing negotiations by a planted question from his own party.

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Crosbie: A planted question.

An hon. Member: That is exactly what happened.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I thought that was rather strange. Aside from that, in the exchange he and I had before he reached that point, I thought I indicated that we have not yet seen the resolution. The government indicated that it will follow, as closely as possible, what the committee has said. I have no guarantee of that, nor does any other person in the House or elsewhere. I cannot see any reason why one should give the government a blank cheque with respect to a matter we have not seen.

An hon. Member: Oh, come on.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is my first point.

Mr. Crosbie: We are not going to do it, anyway.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): If I may say so, at least at this point it is almost like saying that I should agree, as a matter of advantage to my colleagues and I, to give my friend \$100 for nothing. I do not negotiate that way, so we will see as the debate goes on; but certainly it will not be in advance of seeing the resolution.

Quite frankly, I think it was improper conduct—and I say that with the greatest respect—to have placed that planted question by the hon. member for Jonquière.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, certainly it was not my intention to ask for a blank cheque for the government. The offer I was making, resulting from the legitimate question put by an hon. member of this House, was only to accommodate members on both sides of the House. After all, it was not Liberal members who did their gymnastics in front of the Speaker last fall; it was the hon. member's colleagues.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Pinard: Perhaps this proposal would allow those members to participate in the debate. If we sit ten additional hours a week and if speeches last 20 minutes, it will mean a lot more Members of Parliament will have an opportunity to speak on this important subject, even if it is the conclusion of the debate.

On the other hand, I understand the hon. member's request. I think it is a fair request, that my colleague see the resolution before committing himself. I was not asking for an answer