

*Business of the House*

opportunity to express itself in regard to the proposal that was made, that the time of sitting be extended tonight until midnight, and that this added opportunity be given for the consideration of the measures that are before us. Having regard to the fact that we have already been sitting much longer hours than usual, and that most of the members of this house have been sitting on committees as well during these longer hours of the house, I submit that what the hon. member has said in support of this motion is amply demonstrated by the fact that so many of the members already have shown their inability to continue to sit the present hours, without extending them into an all-night session.

I believe the proposal which has been made is reasonable in every way. I think twelve o'clock midnight is the very latest the members of this house should be asked to sit to consider extremely important business affecting not merely thousands or hundreds of thousands but millions of Canadians in their daily lives.

When the vote was taken on the amendment it was perfectly clear that no matter to what extent the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) might indicate that, as head of the government, he was not asking his followers to follow a particular course, there was no doubt about what course was being followed by the members; and that course was consistent with the warning he gave as to what would be done unless the house carried through with this resolution.

I do not intend to enlarge upon the remarks which might justifiably be made and which will be made in regard to what this really means unless the government is prepared to accept a reasonable offer to extend the sitting hours tonight. I can only repeat to the leader of the house, who is in his place, that there is before us legislation of the utmost importance. Let me refer to simply one measure which calls for extensive discussion. I refer to Bill No. 23, to amend the Government Annuities Act. That is an act of vital importance to scores of thousands of Canadian workers. Right at this time agreements are under negotiation which depend upon certain features of this measure. It should be recalled, however, that this measure contains a section as to cash surrender provisions which has been opposed by the members of the Conservative party in the committee because of the effect these would have, quite apart from the provision of annuities. In fact, the opinion has been expressed that the inclusion of that section actually defeats the basic purpose for which this act was introduced. That alone is a subject which

[Mr. Drew.]

calls for extensive discussion and consideration. I have mentioned the others that are before us.

I suggest that the leader of the house indicate that he is prepared to support this amendment. If he gives that indication, I know perfectly well there will not be much doubt about the way the members of the party opposite will vote. Still better, I would hope that following the discussion that has taken place, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would seek the concurrence of the house either in support of this amendment or in the withdrawal of the motion itself. I ask the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who has been one of the most assiduous students of the rules, traditions and procedure of this house, to recognize what really was the effect of the Prime Minister's statement when he referred to this matter this morning. I suggest to him that he consider this motion not alone in the light of the way it originally stood but in the light of the statement made by the Prime Minister this morning. I took down what the Prime Minister said in the discussion of this subject. He said:

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to debate this motion, but I do intend when the house is in session tomorrow, if the business has not been concluded, to give notice under the closure rule that it will be applied on Thursday, December 27.

I hope the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will recall that there was no break, and that that was one sentence. In other words the Prime Minister is going to take no part in this debate, but he wants to know that if we do not submit and simply let everything go through tomorrow, he is going to introduce closure on Thursday, December 27. I would ask the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who has been so greatly concerned about the freedom of the members of this house to express themselves, to recognize the fact that what we are discussing now is not a question of when we close but of whether this parliament is still the supreme authority or whether we are going to have the whip cracked over our heads by the Prime Minister of Canada in this way.

**Mr. Knowles:** Will the leader of the opposition permit a question?

**Mr. Drew:** Certainly.

**Mr. Warren:** He does not know it is Christmas.

**Mr. Knowles:** I wonder if the leader of the opposition realizes that, as a result of the announcement made by the Prime Minister this morning, it becomes even more imperative that my motion pass so that members