

I have the honour to be,
Madam,
Your obedient servant,
Edmond Joly de Lotbinière
Administrative Secretary
to the Governor General

Madam Speaker: Does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans wish to answer the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton) or does he wish to put it off to another day?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) and myself discussed the matter but he had decided to look at the file before deciding on whether or not to give an answer. I do not know whether he is ready to do so now. I do know he did not get to see the file until he got back from Whitehorse early in the week.

Madam Speaker: The question could remain in abeyance but I am against doing so for any length of time. That is why I wanted to know whether or not you intended to answer it today.

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[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding the usual announcement on Thursday. I assume that next week's business will include some economic measures to solve the desperate economic condition of the country and that these will be placed before us for consideration. Could the government House leader also inform us as to the business which he expects to be bringing in tomorrow and next week?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs is now dealing with two or three important budget bills. As soon as the debate on the Constitution is completed, I can guarantee to my hon. colleague that we will bring some measures to the House dealing with energy and with the economy.

[Translation]

With regard to the legislative program for the next few days, may I say to the House that we shall devote the whole of next week to the constitutional debate, with the exception of Tuesday which will be an allotted day. Should there be any changes in that program, Madam Speaker, I shall so advise the parties of the opposition in due course.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Am I to understand that when the House leader referred to the whole week he did not include next

Business of the House

Friday, the 27th, respecting which the House now has an order?

Mr. Pinard: Yes, Madam Speaker, it has been agreed that the House will not sit next Friday, and obviously when I said that next week will be devoted entirely to dealing with the Constitution except for next Tuesday, next Friday was not included.

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, with respect to the House business, may I remind the House leader of two or three items.

First, I hope he is keeping in touch with the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs and will permit any legislation he produces to be dealt with without delay.

Second, may I ask him to pursue the matter I raised yesterday, namely, the possibility of our concluding the debate on the bill which would turn the Post Office Department into a Crown corporation. As hon. members are aware, there is some urgency about this. We certainly are prepared to deal with the matter in one day or, if we can avoid amendments which are contentious, it could be dealt with in an even shorter time than that.

May I also ask the minister, since he is the member of the cabinet responsible for the administration of the Public Service Staff Relations Act, whether he will take a serious look at the recommendation which the special joint committee made in 1967 when it reported that legislation. I refer to the recommendation that there be parallel legislation providing for collective bargaining on Parliament Hill. Will he give serious consideration at long last to the possibility of implementing that recommendation?

My last point has to do with the promised short debate on the report of the Standing Committee on Transport, on the understanding that there will simply be one short speech per party. What is the status of that report?

Mr. Pinard: The hon. member put four questions. In answer to the first one, I am still in touch with the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs. In fact, I spoke to him today and I hope to have a clear reply in a short time.

On the second question about the Post Office legislation, as I said yesterday, I am certainly willing to consider dealing with the report and third reading stages of that bill as soon as possible if we can come to an agreement among the parties and the House leaders on a short time for the debate. I took note of the offer made by the NDP to spend a day or even less time to conclude the debate on that bill. I look forward to a House leaders' meeting in the near future to discuss this bill as well as to discuss the debate on the report of the Standing Committee on Transport, which was the fourth question put by the hon. member.

Finally, I will look at the recommendations of the joint committee referred to by my colleague in relation to amendments to the PSSRA.

Mr. Crosbie: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.