

Business of the House

ness, as the government is responsible for determining the order of business, including allotted days, under Standing Order 18(2). I wanted to discuss the matter with him at that time, but I learned too late that he could not come, probably for very valid reasons. He cannot therefore blame me for that. I had the courtesy to invite him to discuss this matter long before that. This was not possible since he had other meetings to attend, but he could have told me so earlier. Madam Speaker, the determination of the order of business is the responsibility of the government. An allotted day is a day when the opposition introduces a motion, but as for the rest, it still comes under government orders as provided by our Standing Orders and parliamentary practice, and the determination of the order of business is our responsibility.

The hon. member for Yukon is now saying that he filed notice with the Clerk at a few minutes past one o'clock of the motion which he intended to introduce tomorrow. Yet, Madam Speaker, when I asked him at 2.15 or 2.10 in the presence of the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain, the House leader of the New Democratic Party, whether tomorrow would be an opposition day for his party or the NDP, he did not have the courage or the courtesy to give me an answer and he told me that the matter had not yet been decided and that he was still discussing it with his colleague. If he had really wanted to act in good faith, he would not have taken it upon himself to play hide and seek and he would have told me: Mr. Pinard, I have filed notice with the Speaker and you will learn the substance of this notice at six o'clock; it will be our allotted day. Instead of giving me a frank answer, he missed the meeting of House leaders this morning, which the House leader of the NDP attended, and he refused to indicate whether the motion to be introduced tomorrow would be a Progressive Conservative or an NDP motion. I did not want to know the substance of this motion before six o'clock, but for reasons of courtesy, I wanted to know who would move the motion on the next allotted day.

Moreover, when I learned from the New Democratic Party that they had also filed notice concerning a different subject for the same allotted day tomorrow, I concluded that the Progressive Conservatives had not been able to come to an agreement with the NDP and that Your Honour would have to decide which of these motions should be heard tomorrow, and if one of these motions calls for a non-confidence vote, we should have to wait until you decided which motion should be heard to know where we are, and we have no indication that you will make a decision later today or tomorrow at noon. Under the circumstances, in view of such uncertainty and lack of planning on the part of hon. members opposite and since we are faced with so many intrigues and so little good faith, the government has no other alternative than to take its responsibilities and try to respect the rights of the opposition. I can assure the opposition members that they will have all the allotted days to which they are entitled under the Standing Orders between now and March 26, but the next allotted day

will not be tomorrow. It will probably be Friday of next week and tomorrow we shall call Bill C-78.

• (1510)

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, the government House leader knows that when I put the question to him at the beginning of this session as to whether or not we would hold regular weekly House leaders' meetings, he said that it had not been the practice in the past. He said it would be done only if necessary. He was not going to commit himself to regular House leaders' meetings. Also, on several occasions in the past he has agreed to House leaders' meetings which he himself has cancelled. There is nothing strange in cancelling attendance at House leaders' meetings if something important arises.

When government members start criticizing us, I would ask them: when they were in opposition, how many House leaders' meetings did their House leader go to when we called him? How many House leaders' meetings did the present Minister of Finance go to when we called him? Talk about co-operation! Nil! Zilch!

This is the first House leaders' meeting which he has called that I have unavoidably missed. The House leader for the New Democratic Party knows full well that the option was open to him to have the motion, which is now filed, standing in the name of his leader, if they so chose. They did not choose to do that. I learned that at about 1.30 p.m., although I knew the leaning of his leader well before that time. He also knows the subject matter of that motion. We on this side are not obliged to advise the government of the subject matter of an opposition day! We have no such obligation.

An hon. Member: Nobody asked you.

Miss MacDonald: He did!

Mr. Nielsen: The real reason is that they have a yellow streak down their backs! They are afraid of this motion!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You've got the yellow head!

Mr. Nielsen: I am surprised, and I would ask Your Honour to check with the Table, because if I heard him correctly, and I may have misheard him on this point, he seemed to imply that he knew that if the NDP were to have the day, they would raise another subject matter. I would be surprised if anyone in the NDP informed the government of any intended subject matter that they would raise if it were their motion. There is no obligation to do that, either.

The other point I want to make concerns ordering the business of the House. The government informed us last Thursday what the order would be today. The government reiterated that on Friday, again on Monday and again on Tuesday, if my recollection serves me correctly. Now, all of a sudden, the government withdraws the day. The government House leader could have called me on the telephone yesterday