

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 13, 1988

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that there have been discussions among the Parties and the staff of the Parties as to the most appropriate order of business today. It is our wish to proceed in as orderly a manner as possible after the completion of the vote on the Ways and Means Motion.

Therefore, we are proposing to the House that we resume debate after the vote on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne in order to give the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Turner) an opportunity to speak, and also in order to give the Leader of the New Democratic Party an opportunity to speak.

We make that proposal on the condition that the procedural debate which is on the Order Paper in my name, which we intend to call tomorrow, be completed by 7 p.m. Wednesday evening.

Mr. Gauthier: That's closure.

Mr. Murphy: Closure on closure.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, while it seems reasonable on the surface that we have the debate continue today, I do not think that it is reasonable for the Deputy Government House Leader to attempt to direct you, Sir, as to at what point the procedural debate we are sure to have on the acceptability of the Government's motion to suspend the rules should conclude. I think that any such decision as to how long debate on the acceptability of the motion will go is a matter for you, Sir, to decide. I am prepared to rely on Your Honour's good judgment in this matter.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I have two reactions to the comments made by the Deputy House Leader. The first

concerns the intention to proceed with the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, something which seems to be appropriate. I would like to seek an understanding at this point that once we get to this item on the agenda that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner) will speak and, with the approval of the House, that the Leader of the New Democratic Party will follow immediately in terms of having a chance to complete his remarks immediately following the remarks of the Leader of the Official Opposition. I seek that clarification first, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister in reply.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, naturally, on the understanding that the entire suggestion is taken into account, yes, we on the government side are prepared to hear the Leader of the New Democratic Party after the Leader of the Official Opposition speaks. We want to give both individuals full opportunity to speak. Naturally, we would proceed on that basis on the understanding that, however, the procedural debate on the motion which is on the Order Paper now be called tomorrow and be completed by 7 p.m.

I am giving our undertaking that the Leader of the New Democratic Party would have ample time, the same as the Leader of the Official Opposition, to speak. We look forward to the remarks of both individuals.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a twist in the way the House does business. Never before have we had conditions attached to the approval for the Leader of the New Democratic Party to be allowed to complete his remarks. I am concerned that the Deputy House Leader for the Government is also directing decisions that ought to be Your Honour's to make and tying our hands as to when we can make procedural arguments and when they have to be completed. That does not seem to be a decision that the Deputy House Leader should be making but one that in fact Your Honour should be making.

I want to say that we have to consider this proposal. We are certainly prepared to consider it. But at this point I am not in a position to respond either favourably to it or against it.