

Business of the House

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Closure!

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to comment briefly on the two points of order raised by the hon. member for Peace River and I then wish to raise one of my own.

May I point out, Mr. Speaker, that any debate on the substance of the motion must, of course, take place when the motion has been presented to the House, presumably tomorrow, so at this point we are dealing only with procedural points that should be dealt with before we move to the stage of actual debate.

Despite the many times I find myself in very close agreement with my friend from Peace River, I am afraid I do not see eye to eye with him on the points he has raised this afternoon. It is true that in the secret meetings of House leaders we discussed the whole package.

An hon. Member: A lot of leaks there.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Well, leaks are the order of the day. In this case the government has to operate under Standing Order 75C as it reads. Standing Order 75C permits a motion dealing with only one stage of debate. There is a reservation, namely, that if there were a report stage and third reading coming up, those two could be dealt with in one motion, but as far as a debate in the committee of the whole stage is concerned a motion under Standing Order 75C can deal with that and that alone. I do not see that the minister is out of court on that count.

The second point that the hon. member for Peace River raised had to do with his contention that 48 hours' notice is required, that the motion has to be put on the order paper and so on. Again, however, I have to disagree with my good friend because it seems to me the wording of 75C is quite clear. It says that a minister of the Crown who from his place at a previous sitting has done two things, has stated that agreement cannot be reached under 75A or 75C, and who has given notice of his intention to do so, may move that motion at the next sitting. The hon. member relies on Standing Order 42. I suggest that 75C is more analogous to Standing Order 33 in this respect. Standing Order 33, an infamous one, provides for the full-dress kind of closure and in that Standing Order there is the same kind of reference, namely, to the minister giving notice the previous day from his place in the House. No 48 hours notice is required in that case; no notice is put on the order paper. So I would say that the minister has the right to give notice, as he has done today, and to make his motion tomorrow.

• (3:00 p.m.)

However, despite my disagreement on those two points there is a point which I feel should be raised even though Your Honour might feel you should treat it simply as a caveat. As the hon. member for Peace River has said, this is the first time, out in the open at least, when an attempt has been made to use Standing Order 75C. So whatever happens now becomes a precedent and we may find ourselves guided in the future by the precedent created on this occasion. The point which it seems to me ought to be made is that Standing Order 75C can be used by a minis-

[Mr. Baldwin.]

ter of the Crown only when he can assert that there has been no agreement under either 75A or 75B. If, at this time, the three of us on the opposition side of the house were in agreement as to what we should do about the remainder of the debate, and could cite that agreement, the minister would not, I submit, be able to proceed under 75C. This is obvious, but it seems to me that if this point is not made when the rule is being used on this occasion the minister might on some other occasion get up and try to do it again in circumstances which were somewhat different.

The fact of the matter is that on this side of the House, although all three parties are opposed to Bill C-259, we differ as to how we should spend the remaining time, what subjects we should spend it on, and so on. We have not been able, therefore, to reach a three-party agreement as to what should be done with the remainder of the time. It is only because of this situation that the minister is in a position to use Standing Order 75C. My indication at this time that we do not take procedural objection to the use of this rule by the minister is made for the purpose of the record and it is put there for future reference.

When we come to discuss the motion itself, presumably tomorrow, we shall indicate our opposition to this rule being used. We believe that just as we have conducted this debate so far—granted, for many days—on the basis of unanimous agreement among the House leaders, a further attempt should have been made to reach a conclusion to this debate by agreement rather than by the method of confrontation.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I support the comments which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has just made. Bill C-259 is in my opinion a kind of bill omnibus and I wish that it could have been split up. It could have been passed more quickly.

It is now useless to hope that it can be split up. We should bow to facts and take matters as they come and I think that we, of the Social Credit party, have expressed our willingness to co-operate with the government so that parliamentary procedure would be complied with, that we could have reasonable discussions and that the government could pass the bills it has introduced.

I think that if we read the same things in French we can come to an agreement.

I think that Standing Order 75C which is being used for the first time will pose certain difficulties. You will remember that Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75C were debated in this House. Of course, the majority came up on top but it was understood that it was simply a measure of protection and that Standing Order 75C would never be applied.

In any case if it became necessary to do so its application would be dictated by certain rules that are well established. I think the minister assuming the responsibility of introducing such a motion should give notice as he did today and the motion could be passed tomorrow. This is my way of seeing things. I think that if the government intends to resort to Standing Order 75C, it should give hon. members enough time to assume their responsibilities as representatives of the people and study as many