

Business of the House

Mr. Churchill: Yes; the same order that I indicated on Friday. It would be helpful to continue on Wednesday with legislation if we make progress tomorrow. However, I have no means of knowing what the house intends to do. Consequently I cannot forecast just what we should do on Thursday and Friday. For tomorrow I have one suggestion to make which the house might consider. In view of the importance of the budget speech which commences at eight o'clock tomorrow night and the fact that the chief spokesman of the opposition likes to reply, it is suggested that the house might now determine that it will sit past 10 o'clock tomorrow night in order that there may be opportunity for that type of reply without any interruption, and that we adjourn say at 10.30 or earlier if the spokesman for the opposition moves the adjournment of the debate before 10.30 p.m.

Mr. Chevrier: Will there be no opportunity to discuss the budget on Wednesday on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and any other member who may wish to speak on it in the prescribed order?

Mr. Churchill: There is going to be plenty of opportunity for discussion, whether it is Wednesday or not. On some occasions the opposition has asked for two intervening days for consideration.

Mr. Chevrier: May I just put this suggestion to the house leader without wishing to get into an argument. The practice has been to allow someone to speak on behalf of the opposition. However, the Minister of Finance as a rule completes his budget presentation about a quarter to ten. It is not fair to ask anyone on the part of the opposition to speak for 10 minutes only and then not go on with the budget the next day. That is the point I am making. That was the point I wished to put to the house leader in inquiring whether or not there will be an opportunity to discuss the budget on Wednesday.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. member says it is not fair to go on with the budget the next day. However, that has been the practice over the years. The hon. member for Greenwood is the one who can give evidence to the fact that there always was an intervening day. Sometimes the Easter recess intervened.

Mr. Chevrier: It was the practice when the debate was continued on the next day. I grant that. But if there is not going to be a continuation of the debate on Wednesday, then the question I asked the house leader was this: What opportunity would there be for the opposition to debate the budget?

Mr. Macdonnell: May I say one word as I think there is confusion as to what was the practice for many years on the night of the budget. After the Minister of Finance spoke I, who was the then financial critic, was allowed to follow and I was left a good deal of discretion as to the time occupied; but the practice which I followed in all those years was to speak for not more than 10, 15 or 20 minutes and then to adjourn the debate. Never, I think, did the discussion continue the day following. Usually several days intervened.

Mr. Pearson: May I ask the Prime Minister whether there will be full opportunity to continue the budget debate?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I find it difficult to understand the attitude of the Leader of the Opposition. Day after day I read reports saying, "Fiery Leader of the Opposition says 'bring on the election.'" I now find him running for cover.

Mr. Pearson: As is customary, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's observations are both irrelevant and offensive. I am asking the Prime Minister whether he proposes to choke off the budget debate after the Minister of Finance has made his statement.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The house leader has stated that the opposition will have an opportunity tomorrow evening. We will extend the time if the house will agree. Then the determination as to the business for Wednesday will be announced tomorrow night.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Talk about closure and the rights of parliament.

Mr. Chevrier: I have another question. I had asked the house leader whether there was any disposition on the part of the government to bring on the supplementary estimates. Before he answers that question may I put this proposition to him. It has been the practice in the past—and I am sure the hon. member for Greenwood would confirm this—to do what has been suggested now by agreement.

Mr. Pickersgill: Always in advance.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, always in advance; but not now, of course.

Mr. Speaker: The one matter which appears to have been suggested and which stands for consideration and for decision of the house was that, if necessary, the time might be extended, in order to permit a preliminary reply after the Minister of Finance has finished his budget speech. Is it agreed that is the wish of the house?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.