

Business of the House

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, there were those discussions, there is that understanding, and we are prepared to agree.

Mr. Knowles: Yes, Madam Speaker, there were such discussions among us and we also agree.

Madam Speaker: Does the House agree to the proposed motion of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard)?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, at this stage I was expecting the usual question on House business. Since we are on a point of order, I might as well outline the upcoming matters. There are some important items coming up next week, and I believe it is important for hon. members to know exactly what will be the business of the House during the next days.

Today we will continue with the debate on the borrowing authority bill. I shall move a motion later. After it is voted on tonight, we will go on with the debate and the appointed day for terminating the second reading stage of the borrowing authority bill will be next Monday. Tomorrow we will deal with the bill to which I just referred, the excise tax bill. If any recorded division is required as described in the House order of a few seconds ago, then this vote will be taken Monday night as well.

[Translation]

As for the conclusion of the constitutional debate, it is obvious that if the report is tabled tomorrow, as can be expected, the concluding stage will begin Tuesday afternoon. Most probably the form of that debate will consist in a direct resolution introduced by the government. This way I think I am answering an insistent request made last fall by my colleague, the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party.

So I want to confirm that, unless something unexpected comes up and subject to a last glance at the committee report, most probably we will allow debate on a direct resolution rather than on concurrence of the committee report, so that if there are any amendments, since several were debated in committee, but if there were one or two more, or any number for that matter, I hope hon. members will be reasonable, those amendments might be moved more directly than otherwise possible had we introduced or were we to introduce a motion for concurrence in the committee report.

Obviously, in both instances, it would be possible to move amendments but we would rather proceed in a way which meets the requests made by the opposition parties and which is also in keeping with our more direct approach to enable us to have a more direct debate in the House as well. Essentially, Madam Speaker, that will be the business of the House until the end of the week and early next week. The concluding debate on the Constitution will begin on Tuesday.

[English]

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I thank the President of the Privy Council with respect to that matter. However, I notice in his recitation on how the government intended to handle this matter he stated that "quite probably" it will be in a resolution.

Mr. Pinard: Most probably.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): He has now amended that to "most probably".

Mr. Pinard: That is what I said the first time.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Very well, quite probably is the way it stands.

Mr. Pinard: Most probably.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I beg your pardon. So that there will be no misunderstanding, and I was listening to the translator, not listening to the hon. member in my impeccable French with my impeccable French ear, I would like to ask the government whether the resolution will be available in the normal course with the appropriate 48-hour notice? In that case, it would appear on the Order Paper on Saturday morning in the normal course of its distribution in the House and elsewhere. Is there any possibility that we might see that resolution earlier, given the fact that the resolution which will be produced does not necessarily have to follow word for word or arise completely out of the report of the joint committee? Will it be possible to see that resolution in advance?

While the minister is on his feet with respect to that matter, could he tell us whether it would be appropriate to designate an allotted day today. I have sent him a series of allotted days, and I understand that there is no disagreement with the respective dates which are Tuesday, February 24; Wednesday, March 4; Wednesday, March 18; and Thursday, March 26. I would ask the minister to designate Tuesday, February 24 now. Would the minister tell us whether that list is reasonably acceptable and could he designate that particular day now?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, with regard to the first question on the resolution, I said in French "plus que probable".

What I meant is "most likely". When I say "most likely", the chances are 99 per cent. I would merely like to keep open the possibility, after considering the committee report, of taking some other course if for procedural reasons it is necessary. However, since it is most likely we will deal with the direct resolution, we will give 48 hours notice in accordance with the Standing Order, but first we must await the tabling of the report. That means that the notice will be given around noon tomorrow. I will do my best to make that resolution available to my colleagues in both opposition parties as soon as possible, and perhaps it will be possible tomorrow afternoon, to allow them ample time to review it. In addition, the fact that the debate will begin on Tuesday, rather than Monday, will