

*Extension of Sittings*

order to accomplish what I do not think is possible, namely to fix the agenda of the House according to some timetable that some Members of the Tory Party had for holidays. I tell them to have a nice holiday but when they come back the House will be sitting again. Maybe they will have missed an important part of this debate, a democratic exercise which I think is very important.

We will have none of that. We will have none of that fixing of the agenda of the House of Commons to accommodate some Tory Member who wants to sun himself in the south.

**Mr. Thacker:** Sheer nonsense.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Let us get back to the open-ended, sloppy motion that we have before us. I want to take some time because it is indeed a motion that needs to be explained thoroughly. It is true that it has some similarity with the motion we debated in June, but it has other things we would like to explain to Members.

[*Translation*]

The motion can be summarized as follows: it seems to provide that the House will sit without interruption for an indefinite period.

Mr. Speaker said in his ruling that for him, the session was a definite period; therefore, the motion in question was acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to call your ruling into question or to reflect in any way on this judgement—I accept it. But I will remind you that a session can last as long as a parliament. We have already had parliaments that lasted only one session. We had one with the Conservative Government in 1979 that only lasted one session.

So there is nothing in this motion that says that this session will end some time, in January, February or March.

So the session could last as long as the present Parliament and end some time in 1992. That is what we meant, Mr. Speaker, when we said that this motion was open-ended and not time-limited.

The motion says that the House will not sit on December 26. That is the only day; obviously the day after Christmas, Sunday, December 25, is the 26th and the House would not sit then. But it would not adjourn on December 21 as provided in the Standing Orders of the House to resume its work on January 16 as the Standing Orders specify.

The motion makes it clear that the House would not adjourn at 6 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, but would continue sitting without interruption until midnight. The motion does not

indicate that the House would use these extended hours to study specifically Bill C-2 dealing with the Mulroney—Reagan Trade Agreement. It does not state anything to that effect.

This motion which calls for the consideration of this bill is not limited in any way by the proposal. The third paragraph of the motion states that, for the duration of this session or until otherwise ordered, the provisions of Standing Order 73(1) and (2) respecting committee stage of Public Bills is suspended, and that all such Bills will be ordered for referral to a committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, this would make it impossible for Members of the House to move amendments, for a committee of the Whole is not a forum where a political group represented in the House could submit a series of amendments for study. This is only possible during the clause by clause consideration by a Committee of the Whole.

Also, this motion would suspend the application of a Standing Order which requires the referral of all Bills to a specific committee that is independent from the House. It would also make it possible for the Government to go against a principle embodied in the rules of the House of Commons for the past 20 years. Over that 20-year period, the House has abandoned consideration of Bills in a Committee of the Whole. It is being done now through legislative committees, which is certainly a good thing, but the Government would like to suspend the relevant Standing Order and have the matter referred instead to a committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to return to each of these provisions, because, on the one hand, whether it likes it or not, the Government cannot state that it is dealing in good faith, and on the other hand, these provisions contain some absolute nonsense. I will now deal with the latter.

At present, there is not a single committee in existence. According to our Standing Orders, within the first 10 sitting days after the commencement of each session, a striking committee must be appointed to determine exactly which Members will make up the standing committees. This has not been done. There is no possibility for ordinary Members or backbenchers to introduce Bills which would be subject to a random draw. It is the Chair, usually represented by the Deputy Speaker, that is responsible for this draw to establish the order of precedence; there can be no such draw on bills because no Standing Committee is sitting at present. I suggest therefore that paragraph 5 of this proposed motion is somewhat odd and absolutely out of order.