

Access to Information

hope as well that the vote next Wednesday could also be deferred until a week today, the latter in order to enable western members to be in their ridings by July 1. I understand that it is somewhat easier to do for Atlantic members but it is absolutely impossible for western members to be home if we vote at the usual time next Wednesday on the New Democratic Party amendments.

I make that proposal in the spirit of co-operation and in the hope that the government will find it acceptable and agree to it.

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in the attitude of the Progressive Conservative House Leader, because he has decided to negotiate publicly, in the House, instead of privately as is our custom. He knows perfectly well that we cannot agree with suggestions he made earlier, for the simple reason that when we decided to consider the Access to Information Bill today, there was a tacit agreement with his party critic to have this evening's votes dealt with quickly and sensibly.

Some moments earlier today, when the hon. member was absent from the House, I had an opportunity to talk to his party critic who is here in the House, the member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), and with representatives of the New Democratic Party. We reached an agreement whereby the entire body of amendments and third reading would be disposed of very quickly in not more than three votes. And now, just because I did not agree right away—I was not in a position to do so—to have Wednesday's vote, the first no-confidence vote on the budget, deferred to next week—I told him I was not in a position to give him an answer at this time, perhaps this evening or tomorrow morning—now he is trying to use this kind of pressure to destroy the tacit agreement reached with his party critic and the New Democratic Party critic, to obstruct the proceedings of Parliament once more and deliberately delay this evening's budget speech. His attitude is: All the government has to do is to agree to have the votes on the Access to Information Bill deferred until Monday evening, which happens to suit the hon. member a bit better.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry but this is no way to run Parliament, and I deplore the destructive attitude of the member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) who does not even have the decency to keep our discussions private. If we do reach an agreement, fine, that will be raised on the floor of the House in any case, but when we do not, in that case, we simply agree to deal with the motions before the House, as provided under the rules of Parliament. However, the major spokesmen for each party on this bill have made a tacit agreement. I would never have proceeded with this bill today if I had not obtained this tacit agreement from the assistant of the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), who is the official critic of his party for this bill, last Friday when the hon. member was absent, and from the hon. member himself today. I hope that the hon.

member for Yukon will reconsider the questionable tactic he has used today.

Moreover, I hope that he will change his mind in the next few minutes and abide by the gentlemen's agreement made by the critics for his party and the New Democratic party so that we may dispose quickly of the Freedom of Information Act in the next few minutes. This will have no bearing on my decision concerning his other suggestion to dispose of the vote at another time next Wednesday. This is a totally separate question to which I shall be able to reply later today or tomorrow morning, as I have indicated. If the hon. member is determined to paralyse Parliament and to delay the speech of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) which is scheduled for this evening at eight o'clock, if this is his tactic or his plan and if he is acting in good faith, the best way to put this good faith to the test, if he refuses to stand by the agreement made with the official critic for his party, he can simply as a last resort, so as not to delay the speech of the Minister, accept that the votes be deferred to a time which is considered appropriate by all House leaders.

This would be much more in agreement with our rules than setting the date in advance for next Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. However, I still find it repugnant to give my consent, but perhaps he will not leave me any choice if I am to see to it that the Minister of Finance can make his speech at eight o'clock. I may be forced very inappropriately to give my consent. I shall perhaps be forced to agree to defer these votes to a mutually acceptable date within a reasonable time, but I am not able to agree immediately to deferring the votes to Monday evening, and I would much prefer that he stand by the gentlemen's agreement made by the critics for his own party and the New Democratic party and by his own deputy House leader in his absence last Friday and confirmed today.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I very much regret that the government House leader has taken that belligerent attitude to what I considered to be a very reasonable suggestion. I did so on the basis that we do not want to delay at all the statement of the minister at eight o'clock tonight. We are not going to do that. He does not appear to want to accept that reassurance, but I give it to him again. I based my suggestions to him also on the assurance given to me by our critic for this bill, the member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), that no agreement was made that there would be only three votes. That is what the government House leader said. I asked a direct question of the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, our critic, and he said that was not an agreement whatsoever.

I make that appeal to the government House leader in all reason. The members of the New Democratic Party are prepared to go along with it. I cannot see any reason for its not being acceptable to him. We could defer all votes until Monday and also defer next Wednesday's vote to Monday, without any intention of putting any pressure on the government House