

counsel for both sides to consider various matters which might make the trial more clear or expedite the trial. The value of the pre-trial conference has been proven very amply. In jury trials, pre-trial conferences will be mandatory, if the amendments are passed. The conferences would be held pursuant to the rules of the court. It is done a great deal in Ontario and it has been found to be most valuable.

We are all familiar with the movies and with the fact that arguments often ensue as to whether certain evidence is admissible. The jury must be absent from the courtroom when these arguments are being made. Sometimes the arguments take as long as a day or a day and a half. There was one case in Newfoundland recently where the jury had to be excluded for a couple of days while the admissibility of evidence was argued.

● (1200)

If we pass the amendments which have been suggested to the House, then the judge and the lawyers could decide those kinds of questions before the trial begins so that the jurors are not forced to be absent from the court for hours while these arguments take place. It is time that someone gives some thought to the comfort of jurors. People called upon to serve as jurors lose a lot of their time and it is too bad that they are treated in this way. To exclude jurors from the courtroom while these arguments go on is a waste of time and extremely expensive as well. The provision is included here so that the judge and the lawyers involved can settle these issues before the trial begins.

I believe I have now outlined the Bill, with the help of the Department of Justice which prepared the notes. Most of the important provisions which are in this legislation have been pointed out to the House. I could continue but my Parliamentary Secretary will be speaking and he will be able to address himself to any points which Hon. Members opposite want to raise.

With respect to any suggestion that the Bill should be divided, as I said previously we are not opposed to considering whatever might be suggested. However, I do not believe that to be necessary. These amendments are all necessary and timely. It is long past time they were passed. They do not endanger the common weal of the country at all. They are a step forward and an improvement to the law. While I am anxious that we should deal with the question of impaired and drunk driving as quickly as possible, I believe these other issues should be dealt with as quickly as possible as well.

Considerable work was done on this Bill in order to divide up Bill C-19, which was felt to encompass too much for one swallow by Members of the House of Commons and the Justice Committee. We have attempted to address these provisions which I am sure it will be widely agreed are necessary. I cannot see them as being controversial and I believe we should deal with them, and deal with them expeditiously. There may be—and I am sure there will be—much more need to debate amendments in the other areas I mentioned earlier which we hope to come forward with in February. They will be more

controversial and we will need a longer time to deal with them. However, I hope that Members of the House will deal expeditiously with this legislation today and we will be able to refer the Bill to the Justice Committee.

Unless the Opposition is very much impressed it is unlikely that we can pass the legislation in all stages today and tomorrow. Upon looking across the way, I feel it might be possible. But if it is not, then I suggest we have the Justice Committee take a good look at the Bill in January and I can see no reason why it should not be possible to pass it before the end of January.

The Bill, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, is going to be treated in a non-partisan manner since most of these provisions, except for minor changes, were contained in the previous Bill C-19. We know we have the support of the Official Opposition, and from the attitude of the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway, it is extremely likely that we have the support of the New Democratic Party as well. In any event, we will soon know. Therefore, I commend the Bill and move second reading so that the Bill may be referred to the Justice Committee, unless Hon. Members want to deal with all of it here today by putting it through Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Minister concluded with some suggestions as to how the Bill might be handled. Perhaps I could begin by talking about some of those suggestions. I gather that the Minister would be delighted to get the whole Bill through all three stages today. However, I do not feel that would be appropriate. I believe that some of the provisions of the Bill, although supported by my Party—I will explain why and the nature of our support—do require some further discussion.

I know that when the former Government brought this legislation forward, part of the contemplation of the Government was that it would go to committee and that the private sector and public interest groups would have the opportunity to come forward, make representations and express views about other particular aspects of the Bill. I believe the Bill could be improved even though, as I say, it had its genesis with the former Government, and it could be improved by the process of committee hearings. I make that observation in general but I want to make an exception of the provisions which deal with drunk driving. Those provisions received instant attention and consideration when they were brought forward by the former Government. As the minister indicated, they have been changed very little from the form in which they were first introduced.

I noted with interest the Minister's observations during the last few months that this law might be in effect by Christmas and the New Year. I know that drinking occurs all year and drunk driving regrettably occurs all year as well. However, it is a special problem at this season and I had hoped, and still hope from what the Minister said, that it might be possible to detach that one portion of the bill, which has had quite a lot of public scrutiny, and see that portion enacted today and tomorrow. I would like to offer the full co-operation and support of