

Business of the House

Mr. Hees: I would be very glad to wait for any length of time if I thought an opinion would be forthcoming, but I am afraid it will not be. I earnestly request the members of the government to let the house know what they think about this motion and whether they believe it is the right way to pass legislation. I hope before the motion is voted on we will hear that kind of expression of opinion.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to get back into this debate. After all, the purpose of the motion I moved this morning was to expedite dealing with the business before the house, not that we should spend the whole day deciding whether or not we are going to sit.

Mr. Fraser: That put the monkey wrench in it.

Mr. Knowles: There is before the house now an amendment to my motion which would have us take the usual supper adjournment and then sit tonight from eight until twelve o'clock. That has been put forward by those who support it as a reasonable proposition. All I want to say is that if I thought it was a reasonable proposition I would not hesitate a moment to withdraw my motion, if the house would give me consent, in favour of that proposition; but I do not see that it is reasonable. We have before us quite a few items of business to be dealt with and decided upon before this session ends. I do not see any possibility of the house giving these items adequate discussion in four hours tonight, in the eight hours that we sit tomorrow and in the few hours we would have on Thursday, December 27, in the light of the Prime Minister's announcement that closure is to be applied.

Therefore it seems to me that to pass an amendment which would lay down in iron-clad fashion that we must adjourn at twelve o'clock tonight would be to deny the house the time it might wish to have to deal with the measures that are before us. Most of those who have spoken in support of the amendment and in opposition to my motion characterize my motion as necessarily calling for an all-night sitting, for a sitting until ten or eleven o'clock tomorrow morning. That is not so. It depends upon the house whether my motion results in an all-night sitting or a very short sitting. My motion does not fix a time for adjournment. The amendment of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough) does fix a time for adjournment. My motion leaves it open to the house to take a short space of time, to take until twelve

o'clock if we wish, or to take longer if we wish to conclude more of the business on the order paper.

I suggest if my motion were accepted by the house the result would be that some time tonight the house would be satisfied that it had done sufficient business for the day, and when that point was reached a motion to adjourn the house would probably carry. I want to be perfectly fair. I doubt if a motion to adjourn the house would carry until sufficient business had been done, including disposition of the contentious matter that was before us and perhaps three or four other items on the order paper. But to lay it down as a hard and fast decision that we must adjourn at twelve o'clock tonight after spending the whole day discussing whether or not we are going to sit is denying—

Mr. Fulton: You could have accepted the amendment immediately after lunch.

Mr. Knowles: The offer the hon. member for Kamloops made on the floor of the house had coupled with it a threat. The threat was that if I was not prepared to accept his offer they would continue debating at length the procedural question now before us. Would the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) in all seriousness expect me to treat that as an olive branch, or that it was a reasonable offer in any sense of the term? I cannot see that it was. Frankly I feel that those of us who would like to get home for Christmas have a right to cast our vote on the various propositions connected with the contentious matter before us. I think I have a right to vote on the amendment moved by the hon. member for Kamloops to the Combines Investigation Act. I think I have a right to vote on any other amendment that might be moved on the motion for second reading, and I think I have a right to vote on the motion for second reading itself. If there are only a few hours between now and the time we go home tomorrow night and if only a few hours will be available next Thursday, it raises the question of whether it is worth while for some of us to come all the way back for one day. We are in effect being denied our parliamentary right—

Mr. Fleming: By the Prime Minister's motion.

Mr. Knowles: —to render our decision on the price maintenance question as well as on the other questions that are still before us. Therefore I submit the reasonable thing for the house to do is to accept my motion. That does not mean we necessarily sit all night. The net result might very well be the hour of adjournment suggested by the hon. member for Hamilton West in her amendment. It