

Business of the House

There is one other item I want to put to him as a matter of practice. When his predecessor, the Minister of Finance, was Leader of the Government, it was the practice for us to submit to him a suggested list of allotted days to cover a period of time. That would act as a guide to the government in choosing allotted days. Of course the government was not bound by those days because they were allotted one at a time. I wonder whether that practice would be agreeable to the government House leader, given the fact that we have a fair number of them and a rather large legislative program to accommodate.

Mr. Pinard: Yes, Madam Speaker, with pleasure. I followed that practice last spring. It was not done last fall because all the allotted days were grouped together for the period of supply. I intend to suggest a list. It will not bind the government, but may be useful to House leaders. With regard to today's allotted day, I did consult with my colleagues. It is at their request that I allotted today rather than last Tuesday, which would have been more practical for the government. Therefore, my answer is yes, I will be pleased to provide him with a list.

In so far as the freedom of information bill is concerned, as the hon. member well knows, this House is faced with a very heavy schedule for the next weeks and months. Many times I have asked if there was agreement to deal with second reading stage of that bill in one day. If that were the case I would be pleased to try to find one day which would be suitable to all parties.

The Conservative House leader indicated that he has a long list of speakers and that possibly two days minimum would be required. With so many budget bills and tax bills which have deadlines, it is practically impossible at this time to set aside two days. In addition, we have the constitution to deal with and all the energy measures, as the hon. member knows.

If the opposition wants that bill to be very thoroughly studied by the standing committee, I will be pleased to discuss setting aside a period of time not exceeding one day in the very near future. I hope the Tories will agree to not more than one day's debate, taking into consideration the very heavy burden facing us and which we must deal with in order to assume our responsibilities.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It is unfortunate that this discussion concerning freedom of information has only been in respect of the number of days. Would it be within the purview of the government, leading to further discussion, to have a long day allotted to the freedom of information bill? Would that be within the thinking of the government and, if that is the case, would it be within the thinking of the government that we might have a long day allotted next week to this matter?

● (1510)

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I shall be happy to take this positive suggestion into consideration. It now seems that the Progressive Conservative Party is prepared to agree to one

long day of debate. The Secretary of State has also subjected me to a lot of pressure. I shall be happy to take the suggestion into consideration and, if need be, to discuss it with the House leader in the near future at a meeting of the House Leaders.

[English]

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, in respect of the bill regarding access to information, we are quite prepared to enter into discussion on a shortened debate so it could be given second reading and referred to the appropriate standing committee.

In respect of the customs tariff bill, I am happy to confirm the agreement we revived, the one we had in December, to limit ourselves to a one speaker per party debate on second reading tomorrow so that bill can then be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

I noted also the request of the minister that we get into Committee of the Whole on the income tax bill, C-54, as soon as possible. We are disposed to do that, it being understood, of course, that on clause 1 of the bill it will still be possible for members to make general speeches, the one difference being that they would be 20 minutes each instead of 40 minutes.

I hope the minister will pay some attention to the very friendly answers I have been getting from the Acting Minister of Veterans Affairs, and that if that minister tells the government House leader he has a piece of legislation ready I hope he will fit it in, without question.

May I also ask the government House leader about Bill C-42, the Post Office legislation turning the Post Office into a Crown corporation. We were put under great pressure about that last October and November. The bill is back on the Order Paper. Can it not be called fairly soon?

I have one other question. The other night when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare was answering a late show question by the hon. member for Edmonton South, part of the question being, "Could we not have a full debate on North-South relations and other matters with reference to external affairs", the parliamentary secretary suggested we might get together and each of the opposition parties might contribute one of their opposition days and the government might contribute a day so we could have a full debate in this area, particularly in the area of North-South, and perhaps even more. I wonder if the government House leader would be willing to enter into some discussions about the possibility of having such a full-dress debate on these important matters?

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I have three answers to three questions. First concerning veterans, I will be glad to talk with the acting minister and I hope to be in a position to give a satisfactory answer in the reasonable future.

Second, concerning the Post Office, I have started discussions with the Postmaster General and I think we will be in a position to know if amendments will be required at the report stage. As soon as this is clarified I hope we will find some time to dispose of the report and third reading stages of that very