

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 16, 1972.

The House met at 2 p.m.

PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received the following communication:

Ottawa, February 14, 1972

Sir:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Gerald Fauteux, P.C., Chief Justice of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, February 16, for the purpose of proroguing the third session of the twenty-eighth parliament of Canada.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your obedient servant
Esmond Butler

Secretary to the Governor General

Pursuant to the message just read, the arrival can be expected momentarily of the messenger from the other place. It is my understanding that the practice of our parliament is that when the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod arrives he is to be admitted immediately. At the same time I should advise hon. members that I have received several notices relating to questions of privilege.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: In particular, a notice has been received from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and the hon. member for Peace River sent me a notice on the same matter.

I would suggest that to the extent that time is available the hon. members might be allowed to state briefly what the question is. In view of the fact that the notice from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre was received first, unless there is agreement between the two hon. members I would have to recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre first. However, I gather that the hon. member for Peace River has been chosen to speak first on this matter.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. BALDWIN, MR. KNOWLES (WINNIPEG NORTH CENTRE)—RIGHT OF HOUSE TO DEAL WITH ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS AND QUESTIONS BEFORE PROROGATION

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, it is to uphold the dignity of this House, of myself, of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and of all other mem-

bers of the House, that we reject the attempt by the government to defraud members of the House of their traditional rights.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: This constitutes a contempt of the House. In order to show our protest I want to call to Your honour's attention the presence of strangers in the House and I ask you to put the question forthwith that strangers be ordered to withdraw.

Some hon. Members: Ring the bells.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege, notice of which I sent to Your Honour yesterday, is substantially the same as that raised by the hon. member for Peace River.

This is an ordinary sitting day in the third session of the twenty-eighth parliament. It is a Wednesday on which normally questions on the order paper would be answered. There are scores, if not hundreds, of questions on the order paper for which I am sure the government has answers ready which should be given today, before they disappear from the order paper.

There is also the fact that a special committee of this House and the other place has been meeting while the House has been in recess and it is our understanding that it has a report ready to table. If we go ahead with prorogation without the calling of routine proceedings it will not be possible for the report to be tabled and, indeed, that committee will be dissolved as a result of prorogation. Any suggestion that this can be corrected by going through the proceeding of setting up the committee again in another session is, I suggest, an affront to parliament. We are here in session and there are many matters of substance on which hon. members have questions that should be asked. There are statements which should be made.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I suggest that the government is hiding behind the royal prerogative because it is afraid to face the music.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The matter before the Chair at the moment is whether a motion should be put as suggested by the hon. member for Peace River. Obviously the Chair has no motion. According to the Standing Order the Chair has the power to order the withdrawal of strangers, that is, of all people in the galleries, which would include members behind the Chair. I suggest to hon. mem-