

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 20, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE ON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION MEASURE

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, I would like to present to the house the possibility of making a procedural decision with regard to Bill C-173 respecting the organization of the Government of Canada. We have now spent eight sitting days on the bill and it is my impression that members generally would be pleased to see it pass without delay. I wonder if there would be agreement to have it completed before we adjourn this evening.

This could be done in two possible ways, by making an order that all questions should be put at ten o'clock this evening or, alternatively, we would be perfectly agreeable to an order that the time of the sitting be extended and that all questions be put at the end of the extended period of time. I might also indicate that we would be quite agreeable, if other hon. members are, to suspend private members' hour for this purpose.

I have taken the liberty of preparing two motions, Mr. Speaker, one to have all questions put at ten o'clock, and another motion to have all questions put at a later time, if that is the preferred alternative. If one or the other is found to be acceptable to the house we could have it made an order now.

I should add that if the bill is completed before ten o'clock, in view of the fact that the house sat late last evening it would not be the intention of the government to call another item of government business later today. Perhaps we could have an indication from hon. members as to whether one or other of these two courses would be acceptable.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, the portion of the reorganization bill that is left for discussion concerns the

regional development department. This is possibly one of the most fundamental and important sections of the bill, and we have not yet started upon it. We certainly would like to make progress on the bill and will do everything we can to see it is brought to completion, however we do have several speakers who want to make their views known, and who have questions they want to ask of the minister.

I would prefer to wait until this evening to see what sort of progress we have made. The motion for extension of the hours could be brought between nine o'clock and ten o'clock, if at that time it is felt to be useful; but at this particular time we are not prepared to agree to either of the motions that the President of the Privy Council has suggested.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we too regard the portion of the government organization bill yet to be discussed as one of its most important aspects, but we feel it is not unreasonable that we make an effort to conclude the discussion on this bill today. Of the two proposals made by the President of the Privy Council, we believe the one that would allow extra time is preferable, so that hon. members who have contributions to make will not be cut off. We would have been prepared to reach an agreement at this point, but as it would appear this is not possible, perhaps we could discuss the matter during the day and re-open the question some time during this evening, depending upon the progress made.

We recognize that a number of days have been spent on this bill; but the President of the Privy Council will also recognize that we had to spend more time on the Post Office Department than we might otherwise have spent, for reasons which are pretty well known. We do not feel that the time we had to spend on that department should cut into the time to be spent on the important department which is before us today. Nevertheless we hope that by co-operation during the day we will make such progress as to make it possible to conclude debate on this bill tonight.