

bers to compose the standing committees of this house under standing order 63, said committee to be composed of Messrs. Fournier (Hull), Claxton, Casselman, Knowles and Weir.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNAL ECONOMY COMMISSION

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister) presented the following message from His Excellency the Governor General:

The Governor General transmits to the House of Commons a certified copy of an approved minute of council, appointing the Hon. J. A. MacKinnon, Minister of Mines and Resources, the Hon. Colin Gibson, Secretary of State, the Hon. Alphonse Fournier, Minister of Public Works, the Hon. D. C. Abbott, Minister of Finance, to act with the Speaker of the House of Commons as commissioners for the purposes and under the provisions of chapter 145 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1927, intituled: An act respecting the House of Commons.

LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Report of the joint librarians of parliament.
—Mr. Speaker.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

RESIGNATION OF CLERK ASSISTANT AND APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CLERK ASSISTANT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the house that during the recess the resignation has been received of Roy T. Graham, Esquire, K.C., as clerk assistant, and that John T. Dun, Esquire, Chief of Committees and Private Legislation Branch, has been appointed as deputy clerk assistant.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

MOTION FOR PRECEDENCE OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS —DEBATE ON ADMISSION OF NEWFOUNDLAND INTO CONFEDERATION

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to move, seconded by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe):

That the speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be taken into consideration on Thursday next, and that this order have precedence over all business except the introduction of bills and government notices of motions on Thursday and Friday, January 27 and 28, 1949.

I had intended at the same time to move for an order of the house on the subject of business of the house next week, but I have been informed by some hon. members that that arrangement had not yet appealed to them as being the best that could be made, that there might have to be a debate on a motion of that kind, and that it would better suit their convenience if the debate did not take place until Friday. So, instead of combining that with the motion I now put before the house, I would simply give notice of a

motion to be made on Friday with respect to procedure for next week and following days.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as this motion is not in the usual form, I think it would be very helpful to hon. members if the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) would explain the effect of the motion, and what he suggests should be done tomorrow under that motion.

Mr. St. Laurent: The motion is not in the usual form, inasmuch as it does not extend to the whole of the time during which the address of His Excellency the Governor General and addresses in reply may be under debate in the house. But it does provide, in the usual form, that tomorrow and Friday the speech from the throne be considered. The procedure on adoption of the motion would be that the address would be moved and seconded tomorrow. Then I would assume that, in accordance with traditional practice, Your Honour would recognize first the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), that I should follow him, that he would then recognize the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Coldwell), and following the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar, the hon. member for—

Mr. Graydon: No; you did not do that before.

Mr. St. Laurent: —the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low). After those hon. members have been heard, then the debate would continue in such order as might be arranged by the Whips, in the usual manner.

I had intended at this time to move that afterwards, from Monday, January 31, until and including Friday, February 11, matters having to do with the entry of Newfoundland into confederation should have precedence over other matters. But I was told by some hon. members that that did not appeal to them as being the proper procedure, that there would be debate on a motion of that kind, and that it would be preferable not to have the debate which would be expected this afternoon in view of the fact that other engagements had been made. I am therefore giving notice that I will make that motion on Friday. The purpose of the motion will be that on and from January 31 until Friday, February 11, the matters dealing with the entry of Newfoundland shall have precedence. However I am not making that motion at the present time; I am putting a notice on the order paper.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I do think that hon. members should recognize the effect of the motion in the form in which it is presented. In the form in which it is presented the debate on the speech from the throne will

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have precedence only for Thursday and Friday, and to carry forward the debate under the usual terms or following the usual procedure would require another motion, were it not for the fact that the Prime Minister has indicated that he intends to introduce a motion which would have the effect of postponing the debate on the speech from the throne.

I do not think it would be appropriate for me to make any comments on this motion in relation to the motion of which notice has been given. Nevertheless the effect of this motion is such that it would be unwise to ignore the position in which the debate on the speech from the throne is left unless the second motion is carried by the house.

While the Prime Minister may assume that he will be able to persuade a sufficient number of hon. members to produce that result by their votes, such assumption should not blind hon. members to the fact that if this motion as it now stands is carried nothing will have been done to provide for the continued debate on the speech from the throne after Friday.

I suggest that not only is this motion contrary to any motion that has been introduced in this house since confederation; it is a motion which if carried in its present form presupposes the ability of the government to carry a subsequent motion by the acceptance by members of one party of the decision of the Prime Minister without any regard to another motion. The continuance of this debate rests entirely upon that assumption, which, it seems to me, is not consistent with our parliamentary practice.

I urge the Prime Minister seriously to consider the withdrawal at this point of the motion and the substitution, which he can easily make, of the ordinary motion to the effect that the debate continue to have precedence. Then if the subsequent motion gains the support of this house the effect will be the carrying forward of the debate anyway. Such a motion would not in any way be subject to the disabilities that this motion contains.

I should like to point out that I as well as other hon. members of the house are under some handicap in debating a motion such as this because it deals with the address of His Majesty's representative. It is customary, and I believe the record will show that it has always been the practice, that the motion provide that the debate have precedence over all other government business. On those rare occasions when a subsequent motion was moved which had the effect of postponing the debate it related to the debate in the customary form and provided for the carrying forward of that debate without any such limitations as are now laid down. I again ask the Prime Minister to take this into consideration.

[Mr. Drew.]

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggarr): Mr. Speaker, I should like to support the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew). This motion, being worded as it is, does exactly what he says it does: it limits the debate to two days. It seems to me that if we pass this motion we shall be limiting ourselves to Thursday and Friday. Without notice of another motion we might find ourselves in a difficult position if the proposal of the government should not carry on Friday. In a democratic institution we have always the right to presuppose that hon. members may not always vote in accordance with the wishes of the government.

I join the leader of the opposition in suggesting that the wording of the motion be changed. We can deal with the situation as it arises on Friday, when the other motion which the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has foreshadowed can be discussed and, if the house sees fit, passed.

Mr. St. Laurent: I cannot accede to the request made by the leader of the opposition and by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggarr (Mr. Coldwell) because that would be asking the house to make an order and expecting the house to reverse that order on Friday. I moved my motion in this form because I had been told by hon. members that there would be a debate upon any motion made in an attempt to postpone the debate on the address. If that were so I thought it would be preferable to have it made on Friday. I am quite prepared to agree to that.

I am prepared to state here that I am making no other assumption than the assumption that this motion provides for the order of business for two days and that a motion will have to be made on Friday for the order of business subsequent to that. If the order on Friday is not made in the terms of the motion of which I have given notice, I can move another motion for that order of business. This is merely to determine that we can go on tomorrow and Friday with the debate on the address.

Mr. Rowe: By unanimous consent.

Mr. St. Laurent: No, not by unanimous consent but by virtue of the motion I am now putting before the house. If hon. members wish to have a debate this afternoon I am quite prepared to have it. I even suggested that we should have it. However, I was told that that would not meet their convenience because other arrangements had been made for the rest of the day. It was necessary to make some provision for tomorrow and Friday.

On Friday I will move that the debate on the address be not given precedence during those days, but that precedence be given to

the measure with respect to Newfoundland. We do not mean to adopt any dictatorial attitude.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. St. Laurent: Hon. members can say "Oh, oh" all they like, but that is the fact. I know the intent of our desires just as well as hon. members who are saying "Oh, oh". I wish to meet in the greatest degree possible the convenience of all hon. members in the house. I do not want to start a debate today on the reasons for proceeding immediately with the Newfoundland measure; that will come on Friday. If we cannot arrange something that appears to be satisfactory to the majority of the members of the house, we will arrange something else. There is no intention of getting a snap decision of the house, but I do not think it would be appropriate for me to ask the house to make one order today and then come back on Friday and ask it to vary that order.

Mr. Drew: I have asked the Prime Minister to reconsider this, but since he has not done so I would point out that this motion does not produce the effect which he has indicated to the house. He says that this would have the effect of carrying on the debate; that unless there was another motion we would go on with the debate.

Mr. St. Laurent: Oh, no, I did not say that.

Mr. Drew: That was the impression I gained.

Mr. St. Laurent: I am sorry I did not express myself sufficiently clearly. I said that if we could not arrange to go on with the Newfoundland matter we would make some other arrangement for using the time of the house from Monday onward. I quite realize that some provision will have to be made on Friday for the business of the house during the days of next week and following.

Mr. Drew: I should like to continue what I was pointing out. The practice I have suggested is the accepted practice and *Hansard* will show clearly that the right hon. member for Glengarry (Mr. Mackenzie King) on the last occasion, when he as Prime Minister presented a motion of a similar character, presented the motion that has always been presented to deal with the speech from the throne and give it precedence. On the very occasion when he did that he indicated that he would be introducing another motion which would have the effect of postponing the debate on a certain day. Therefore there is no inconsistency in presenting the usual

motion to give precedence to the debate, and to give on Friday, as the Prime Minister now has, notice of a motion, to be debated then, which, if carried by the house, would have the effect of postponing the debate.

This motion is not in the form in which a motion for debate on the speech from the throne has been put forward traditionally in this house. My understanding of the rule is that such a motion requires unanimous consent, or forty-eight hours' notice. I indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that I do not consent to proceeding with this motion in its present form. I want to make quite sure that no suggestion can be made that we are blocking the debate on the speech from the throne. Therefore, if the Prime Minister will now introduce the motion that has been used regularly since confederation, we will support it and give unanimous consent.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The Prime Minister indicated that one of his aims was to avoid a debate on procedure today, but it must be apparent to him that he has made the very move which is likely to produce a prolonged debate. Yet I suggest it is still possible to avoid a procedural debate today if he will accept the suggestion made by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) and the leader of this group. All he has to do is to withdraw the motion he has made and make the motion that has been made on almost every occasion, namely, that the debate on the address begin tomorrow and have precedence until it is concluded. As the leader of the opposition has said, he can then give notice that on Friday it is his intention to move a motion to the effect that notwithstanding the order of January 26 such and such shall be the case. I would point out that not only was this done in that manner last year, but in many sessions the debate on the address has proceeded for a considerable period of time and has then been interrupted by a subsequent motion. I would suggest that the Prime Minister should make the usual motion. If he will accept that suggestion he will avoid a debate today.

Mr. St. Laurent: I think the hon. member is making a mistake. The motion that was made was that the debate on the address have precedence for one day and that on the following Monday measures arising out of the emergency legislation—

Mr. Knowles: On a point of order, that was interpreted to go on and on, indefinitely.

Mr. St. Laurent: Yes, but the motion that was made was not that the debate on the address have precedence until concluded. It was that it have precedence only over the Monday following the opening of parliament,

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and that thereafter legislation having to do with the restrictions announced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) be dealt with. They were dealt with until adjournment and we did not resume the debate until the 28th of January. The motion that was made was as follows:

That the debate on the address in reply to the speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be the first order of business on Monday, December 8th instant, and that this order be followed by government notices of motion and government orders notwithstanding anything in standing order 15.

I had a motion in that form, and I was asked not to bring it forward today because it would give rise to a debate which it was not desirable to have at this time. It is precisely those who asked me to avoid precipitating a debate about it who now say that they cannot accept this motion because it does not provide that the debate on the address will have precedence until it is concluded. I am not in a position to make that kind of motion. If that kind of motion were made it would be an order of the house, and I could not properly ask to have it reconsidered.

Mr. Drew: I do not want to labour the matter, but I do wish to point out again to the Prime Minister that his predecessor in office, who was very careful about procedure, followed precisely this course. He introduced a motion which gave precedence to the debate on the address and indicated that he was going to introduce the other motion. That has been the practice. I repeat that there is a suggestion before the Prime Minister which would solve any problem of procedure and leave it open to him to deal with the other motion. I should like to refer to standing order 45, which seems clear enough:

Forty-eight hours' notice shall be given of a motion for leave to present a bill, resolution or address . . .

And so on.

Unless that is done I submit that the house cannot proceed with the debate. We wish the motion to be put in the usual form to place the debate on the speech from the throne before this house. We will support that motion if it is prepared in the usual way but in the present form it places a definite limitation upon the debate. I cannot give consent to it and I ask you to rule that this motion cannot be debated today.

Mr. St. Laurent: In order to avoid debate I am quite prepared to withdraw the motion and to trust that it will be the desire of hon. members tomorrow that we proceed with the debate on the address. There will not have been any order of the house made, but I trust it will be the wish of the house tomorrow

under the standing orders that we proceed to consider the speech from the throne. I do not want to ask the house to make any order that any hon. member might feel went beyond what I said was intended. If there is any feeling that an order on this motion will have any other effect than to provide that we deal with the address tomorrow and Friday, and that we decide on Friday what we will do next, I do not wish to press it against opposition. I do not think it is the kind of motion which requires notice, but perhaps tomorrow we shall be able to consider the speech from the throne without having had any order made.

Mr. Rowe: Following the government's desires rather than parliamentary rules.

Mr. St. Laurent: I do not think the hon. member is justified in making that remark. Does he really consider that he is?

Mr. Rowe: I think he is.

Mr. St. Laurent: I do not think he is. If there is objection to this motion being made today I am quite prepared to withdraw it and to abide by the standing orders of the house.

Mr. Drew: So that there may be no misunderstanding, I was dealing with a motion in a certain form. The Prime Minister has indicated his willingness to withdraw that motion. We come now to another point. There can be no objection to proceeding with the debate in the usual way in so far as the mover and seconder are concerned, but I am unaware of any precedent for the leader of the opposition and the Prime Minister following immediately afterwards under such circumstances as we have here. I do not think that should be suggested. The speech from the throne has only been presented today. The debate is on that speech, and it is customary to afford the leader of the opposition an opportunity to examine it so that his remarks will deal with it. I want to make that observation now that the Prime Minister has withdrawn the motion. I make the observation as to my views of the procedure on the debate merely for the purpose of avoiding any misunderstanding tomorrow.

Motion withdrawn.

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Mr. St. Laurent moved the adjournment of the house.

He said: Tomorrow the first order of business, I hope, will be a motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 5.43 p.m.