

*Business of the House*

the consideration of this motion this afternoon. Certainly nothing has been put before the house which would suggest any reason for supporting such a motion.

**Mr. St. Laurent:** The reason for making the motion is to determine now that on February 7 we may proceed with the resolutions and legislation necessary to implement the agreement for the union of Newfoundland with Canada. It is an express term of that agreement for union that it will come into force and bring about the union if there is assented to, by His Majesty, a bill of the parliament of the United Kingdom confirming legislation passed by this parliament and by the government of Newfoundland ratifying the terms of that agreement. That procedure requires that there be in this house first of all a resolution, the one that was mentioned first under the heading "government notices of motions" today. That resolution is necessary before any bill can be introduced, because a bill to confirm the agreement will impose charges upon the consolidated revenue fund. Then the bill itself must run the gauntlet of the usual stages of procedure in this house and in the other place before it can become the law of the land. It is felt that it would be undesirable to have the matter dealt with at all by the parliament of the United Kingdom until the parliament of Canada has expressed the views of the people of Canada with respect to the union. Before the parliament of the United Kingdom will attempt to deal with the matter at all, in order to comply with the terms of the statute of Westminster there will be required a joint address of this house and of the senate asking His Majesty to lay before the parliament of the United Kingdom a bill embodying the proper legislation.

When I was over in London some months ago I had some discussion on this subject with members of the government of the United Kingdom, and I was told that they would like to have not less than three weeks to deal with the legislation in their houses of parliament after the proceedings had been completed here. It is therefore urgent, I think, that we reach this matter and ascertain, at as early a date as possible, the views of the parliament of Canada upon the terms of union that were signed last December. It was for that reason that, when I announced to the gentlemen of the press the date that was fixed for the session, I explained to them that we were calling parliament together on a Wednesday instead of a Thursday, as had been done in several previous years, so that there might be a couple of days of debate on the address before we asked parliament to suspend the debate and deal with the matters concerning Newfoundland, as it had been our intention

to ask parliament to do at the time specified in the motion as printed on the order paper.

When notice of this motion was given I found that there were many members of parliament on both sides of the house who felt that it was not necessary to commence on January 31 in order to have the Newfoundland proceedings properly dealt with in time, and that they wished to have at least another full week of debate on the address before adjourning it.

It is my view that we do generally make better progress in dealing with the substantive business of parliament if we do not have too many disputes over matters of procedure, and I would take it for granted that we would be probably just as far advanced with the Newfoundland matter after a week or two if we met the wishes of hon. members who wish to have an additional week to debate the address.

The reason for bringing the motion forward is to have it fixed, that we will start on this matter on February 7, and to inform the law officers of the United Kingdom of this change, which we hope will not necessarily mean that we shall be delaying them in putting before them, if parliament approves of the agreement, the required material so that it can be dealt with in orderly fashion in the United Kingdom parliament.

**Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, first of all may I assure the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and hon. members that on any procedural matters that will facilitate the business of this house he will find the full concurrence of myself as leader of the opposition and those associated with me; but that concurrence does not extend to the point of departing from well established practices, for which departure no substantial reason can be offered. The reasons now presented by the Prime Minister offer no justification whatever for presenting this motion today. I would point out that throughout the whole record of the House of Commons, not only in this chamber but in other chambers in early buildings since confederation, in the majority of occasions on which the debate on the speech from the throne has proceeded without interruption it has actually been completed within the time which would elapse between now and next Friday.

**Some hon. Members:** No, no.

**Mr. Drew:** Some hon. members, of course, are basing their views on recent experience, which is not traditionally the experience of this house, if they examine the record.

[*Interruption.*]

[Mr. Drew.]