

January 15, 1948.¹

Mr. Chairman Mr. Higgins, I still have the closure motion moved by you under consideration and I can only repeat to a limited extent what I said yesterday. It isn't for me to decide the wisdom or otherwise of carrying the motion; but it is my duty to put the motion at such time as I consider to be fair and reasonable. The House tomorrow will have had a week's clear notice of this motion, and the sands of time are running out. So that if a number of members desire that this Convention should finish its deliberations and work by the end of the month is to be given effect to, it obviously follows that the debate on the business presently before the Chair must shortly come to an end. Unless and until I'm shown between now and tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock some good and sufficient reason why I should not put this closure motion, I would like to inform the House now that it is my intention to put it immediately after the order of business begins tomorrow afternoon. Will members please govern themselves accordingly? I do not want any suggestions made outside the chamber, I know there'll be none made inside, that in putting this motion at that time I am leaning one way or the other. The fact is I have taken already the responsibility for deferring this motion for 24 hours, and I am going to assume the responsibility for the next 24 hours of deferring this motion. But having regard to all the attendant circumstances, I think that at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon the final decision should rest with this House.... Therefore, Mr. Higgins, as far as I know, I have every reason to believe that I'll put this motion to the House tomorrow afternoon.

Mr. Higgins I think it's quite fair, Mr. Chairman. After all nobody will agree that we haven't given full debate to this matter in three weeks. I think even Mr. Smallwood will agree. I think every member who's wanted to, would have spoken by the time we conclude our session tonight.

Mr. Chairman I think the opinion of the House should certainly be ascertained. My only worry, you will appreciate Mr. Higgins, was to ensure that this motion wasn't jumped on the House at a time when they didn't have notice.... Tomorrow will constitute one week's clear notice of this motion, and I will have withheld putting this

motion for 48 hours. I do not propose to go beyond that, because it might very well be that I will be exceeding my discretionary power....

Mr. Smallwood I agree that very ample time will have been given by the end of the sitting tonight for the debate of these terms. I think it's very generous of the House, and very ample. If, sir, you put the motion of closure at 3 o'clock tomorrow, and the motion is adopted, I will not have any regrets or recriminations.

Mr. Chairman Thank you very much.

Mr. Smallwood I want, sir, to direct the attention of the House to the fact that I have learned within the past 20 minutes that the Hon. Mr. Job, who has been sick at home and unable to attend, seems to have got the impression somehow that this closure motion is to be put tomorrow, but that it would be put at a stage in the proceedings which would allow him to deliver a speech which he has spent some time preparing. I haven't been talking with Mr. Job, and if I were to consult only my own feelings in the matter, as Mr. Job is not likely to make a very strong speech in favour of confederation, if he hasn't got the opportunity of speaking, I will not shed bitter tears. But I do ask the House to remember that Mr. Job does wish to speak, and if the House were willing to indulge him for say half an hour or an hour, and then put the closure motion, I think you would have been completely fair. He couldn't be here, sir, he's been sick at home. I'm putting it to the sense of justice of the House itself to hear Mr. Job attack confederation, though I would not like him to do it and I would rather he did the other thing.

Mr. Chairman Nobody has more respect for and more sympathy with the Hon. Mr. Job than I have, but I direct members' attention to the fact that the motion is as follows: "To move that immediately before the order of the day is called on Wednesday, January 14, 1948, for resuming the debate on the motion that the Convention resolve itself into a committee of the whole to further consider and discuss the proposals received on November 6 from the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister of Canada, that the said debate shall not be further adjourned." Now this motion supersedes the motion to resolve the House into a committee. Therefore, it is not for me to alter the form of this motion, which is what I would be

¹The following debate is taken from the recording of the proceedings.