

If an opposition motion pursuant to section (14) of this Standing Order is to be proposed on a Friday, forty-eight hours' written notice shall be given that the recorded division on the motion, if demanded, is not to be deferred;

As I ruled on Friday last, it was my view that the opposition had fulfilled the requirements of the Standing Orders in relation to this, and could demand a vote on the Friday.

About the second element raised by the chief government whip, the Chair has serious doubts that the government has any direct role in determining when an opposition motion should be votable. The normal procedure is for the government to designate the day as being an allotted day, and the opposition then decides what the motion to be debated on that day will be and decides also whether or not that motion is one that will come to a vote.

The Standing Orders list the number of allotted days there will be in each Supply period and where the government has failed to designate sufficient days to meet the requirements of the Standing Orders, by attrition those days left in the period must become allotted days, when no other alternative is possible in order to comply with the Standing Orders. That is what happened in this instance. When the House was discussing this matter on Thursday, only two sitting days remained in the period ending March 26, and two days remained in the total to be allotted to the opposition, hence Friday and today had to become opposition days, whether specifically designated by the government or not.

The NDP, anticipating that Friday might be an allotted day, submitted a motion, on notice, on Wednesday before the 6 p.m. close of the Notice Paper, and indicated it wished such motion to be designated a votable motion. This was what subsequently transpired. Friday was an allotted day with an NDP motion debated and voted upon.

In normal circumstances, the government, if it did not wish to vote on a Friday, could undesignate an allotted day and proceed to other business. That was not possible because the calendar ran out and Friday and today became automatically Supply days.

In the arguments presented last Thursday, the government whip raised another interesting point, one that has to do with our embargo practices. The government whip stated that, as a consequence of the embargo placed on the notice of the opposition motion filed last Wednesday by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt and on

### *Speaker's Ruling*

the votable status of that motion, the government was deprived on the 48 hours' notice.

In light of the seriousness of this allegation, I think it is useful to review our long-standing practice with regard to embargoes. An embargo is a well established practice which entitles anyone who is giving notice of a motion to instruct the Table to withhold explicit information about the content of a motion until the actual release of the parliamentary documents containing the notice, that is, the *Order Paper and Notice Paper* and the *Projected Order of Business* paper, documents normally available early the next morning. In the case of an opposition Supply motion, the embargo can include information on whether the motion is votable or not. The embargo is placed exclusively at the request of the sponsor of the motion.

It is completely beyond the authority of the Table to determine whether the notice of a motion should be embargoed. Indeed, the Table makes every effort to follow any instructions given by a member filing a motion. Whether information about a filed motion is to be made public immediately or at the hour when the filing of motions closes, this would be seven o'clock on Monday, five o'clock on Friday and six o'clock on other days of the week, or in a full embargo when the published parliamentary documents become available early the next morning, is entirely in the hands of the sponsoring member. This is true, whether the member is from the opposition or from the government. As I have said, this is a practice of long standing and is adhered to scrupulously by the Table and the *Journals* office in all cases, for obvious reasons of fairness and impartiality. In view of this fact, I could not find that the complaint of the government whip was of sufficient merit to have forestalled or affected my decision of last Friday to allow the opposition their non-deferrable, votable motion.

That being said, however, the consequences which might arise from such a full embargo are serious and the House may wish to consider whether this practice should be modified. In the meantime, the Chair and the Table are bound to abide by the normal practice which I have just outlined.

Notices printed in the Notice Paper which is attached to the Order Paper, are intended to give the members prior knowledge of future matters to be raised in the House. Some matters require 24 hours' notice, others require 48 hours'. If some members feel that more notice is necessary than is provided in the Standing Orders, then I suggest the matter be raised in the proper committee. As the Notice Paper is published under the