

S. O. 29

White Rock—North Delta when he suggests that we do not allow Canadians to petition the House of Commons. That is a most inappropriate suggestion which has no place in a free democratic society.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has heard the interventions of all Hon. Members. This is not the first time that this matter has been raised. Briefly, the issue is, is it appropriate for a Member to receive a petition and then delay for some period of time before presenting it to the House.

The reason that question is posed is that under the Standing Orders, as the Hon. Minister has pointed out, when the petition is presented to the House, the Government is then under a very severe stricture in terms of the number of days allowed to the Government within which it must answer the petition. Of course, that is a matter of considerable interest to the Chair. I must point out that the Standing Orders do not require any particular time within which that petition must be presented by the Member who receives the petition. In fact, there is no procedural rule demanding that an Hon. Member present the petition.

It is common sense in the general suggestion that it is probably in the interests of the petitioners that, in view of the fact that they are expecting a response from the Government, petitions be filed with the House within a reasonable period of time. That is not an order.

The Chair finds some concern in the other point made by the Hon. Member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon). His suggestion is that sometimes when an Hon. Member is presenting a petition and rises to describe the contents or, in this case, the number of petitioners who signed the petition, and the place from which those people came, there may sometimes be inaccuracies in the representations made in the House.

I am sure that the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) did not intend in any way to deliberately mislead the House. He has spoken on the matter. However, all Hon. Members presenting petitions might take note of today's intervention by the Hon. Member for Victoria and try to ensure that, as much as is possible, the representations made when petitions are presented hew closely to the factual situation. I know that all Hon. Members would wish to do so.

The Hon. Member for York Centre.

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MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S. O. 29

NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise with fresh evidence of mismanagement and incompetence within the Department of the Solicitor General. Last week I mentioned one situation, and today I rise to speak on another, namely, the revelation this morning that has shaken public confidence in

the RCMP for mishandling national security informer evidence which may have averted two tragedies.

In light of the submissions that I made last week which have been resolved or settled in the public mind in no way at all, compounded by this morning's revelations which suggest mismanagement and bad direction of the RCMP, I ask again for an emergency debate.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) is clearly a Member of this House who has had experience as a Minister in this area, and who has been following it very carefully. I wonder if I could ask the Hon. Member to clarify the revelation to which he refers. What is the nature of the incident, and when did it take place?

Mr. Kaplan: This morning on the national radio edition of the CBC it was revealed that an informer identified as Paul Besso claims to have told his handler in the RCMP both of the assassination plot against the Punjabi Minister who visited Canada and was nearly murdered, and the downing of the Air India jet, and the possibility of planting bombs on that jet plane.

• (1130)

These revelations are extremely important coming as they do on the heels of revelations last week about information being given to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service which was unheeded. The emergency arises because the public is entitled to be confident that the national security of the country is being protected by the Government. The clear evidence is that in two of the key agencies responsible for Canada's national security there is considerable disorder.

Mr. Speaker: I listened very carefully to the Hon. Member for whom the Chair has great respect, especially on these matters. I am very conscious of the fact that a few days ago a similar motion was made and at that time the Chair did not accede to it.

The reform committee, in dealing with matters of emergency debates, was very clear in the fact that in its wisdom it was not appropriate for the Speaker to give reasons for either allowing an emergency debate or rejecting one. The wisdom of that committee lay in the fact that any reasons the Speaker gives from time to time builds up a kind of jurisprudence of its own and becomes the subject of debate in the Chamber. As a consequence, tempted though I may be to give reasons, I will follow the wisdom of the reform committee and not do so.

However, I draw to the attention of all Hon. Members the following words in the rule.

The right to move the adjournment of the House for the above purpose is subject to the following conditions:

(a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration;

I have commented at another time on what is an urgent consideration.