

that a vote be taken, since he first wanted to make sure that Members on both sides of the House had received reasonable notice, since it was not the intention of the Standing Orders to take them unaware. That is not the kind of circumstance we are dealing with now.

Another situation where the Speaker can demand a vote is in the case of dilatory motions. This is the result of a recent practice that has evolved, where your predecessor, and, if I am not mistaken, you yourself have, in the case of a purely dilatory motion, decided that at the normal time of adjournment it was no longer necessary to call a vote, since in any case the motion had achieved its purpose. Since things were getting out of hand, I feel this was a very sensible and logical decision. Again, however, does not this apply to today's situation.

We are now dealing with a very unusual situation in which the debate ended spontaneously, not because it was interrupted by the Speaker but because there were no more Members to speak to the motion. This eventuality is not covered by Standing Order 15(2). Therefore, the Standing Orders do not limit the time for division bells. That is clear. In cases, Mr. Speaker, where the Standing Orders do not specify how long the division bells are to ring, what is the Speaker's role? That is not so clear, and here we need to have a body of jurisprudence and parliamentary practice. I think the Speaker should take into account precedents established in other countries, and especially, as provided by the Standing Orders when a case is not clear, the precedents established in the United Kingdom. However, we must also take into account the specifics of each case and the procedure peculiar to these other parliaments. Now, the voting procedure in the United Kingdom, I must say, with respect, to my learned colleague from Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), is totally different from ours, and cannot be considered or be allowed to influence the debate at this point.

We have a very special voting system in Canada, and we have Standing Orders that do not specify how long the division bells are to ring. The Standing Orders also fail to provide any direction as to the Speaker's role in cases where there is an unusually long delay before a vote is taken.

I therefore say, with respect, that I think it is reasonable that, for the sake of the order he is supposed to maintain and also in the interests of common sense, the Speaker should consider the circumstances. I think it is both reasonable and sensible that the Speaker, if he decides it is appropriate, should consult with the Leader of the Official Opposition or his Whip, or the Government House Leader or the Government Whip. I believe it is wise for the Speaker to analyze the facts in the light of such consultations, if such was his decision, and in the light of the Standing Orders—where there is no provision for this case—since he has certain discretionary powers to maintain order in the House and ensure that the right of Members to speak to a question is not infringed upon.

Mr. Speaker, what you did yesterday was eminently sensible, and you are to be congratulated. I think that under the

Point of Order—Mr. Nielsen

Standing Orders, you had no choice, with respect, but to stop the division bells before the two Whips entered the House, unless you had found that in the circumstances, it was a purely dilatory manoeuvre on the part of the Government or one of the Opposition Parties. However, yesterday there was no evidence that one of the Parties was acting deliberately to delay unduly the taking of a vote. On the contrary, I believe the Government advised the Clerks at the Table or at least one of the Clerk Assistants, that exceptional circumstances prevailed and kept Hon. Members from exercising their right to vote, as a result of adverse weather conditions. Anyone who knows what the situation was like last night will agree.

[*English*]

Mr. McKnight: Liberal leadership.

Mr. Pinard: It is sufficient to check on the climatic situation which was prevailing yesterday in eastern Quebec, for example—

Mr. McKnight: Where were they? Were they in their ridings? Name two.

Mr. Pinard:—and in the Maritimes.

[*Translation*]

The fact is that many Members were held up by bad weather conditions.

Indeed, I would suggest that the Speaker does not have the right to conclude that Members are not telling the truth, and he has to give the benefit of the doubt to a whip who tells the table officers that certain situations are occurring. It could have been a plane crash that would have sent about ten Members to hospital, or a case of food poisoning after Members had eaten in the parliamentary restaurant, or any number of things. There are circumstances when the Speaker, after consultations, shows common sense and decides to delay the vote because it is not all that important. That is what happened yesterday, and I think the Speaker used sound judgment when he did not force a vote at 6 o'clock and simply interrupted the bells for the night.

You acted in a very humane manner, Mr. Speaker. I think that the House officials and all the staff are very grateful to you. From a humane standpoint, you did not force those people to waste a whole night looking after the fort because you knew full well that the Government whip was not going to show up for the vote before 10.30 the following morning, as he had made it clear to your officers, for the reasons I mentioned earlier. You prevented the staff from staying up all night, for which there would have been no justification under the circumstances. You know, you have saved public money and energy, but above all, I think, you have shown the Canadian people that although some Members of the House do behave like children now and then, yesterday we proved that we could, or at least the Speaker of the House could assume his respon-