

*Routine Proceedings*

procedural discussion, the Chair heard comment from the hon. member from Kamloops, from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader and from the hon. member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

[*English*]

At issue was the disposition of a number of applications for emergency debates of which notice had been given for the previous day, Monday, January 22, 1990. Members had been precluded from proceeding with these applications on that Monday because the House adopted a motion to move to Orders of the Day.

In the spirit of co-operation which sometimes prevails in this place it was agreed that those applications would be deemed to be before the House the following day. They were dealt with on Tuesday, January 23, on that basis. That agreement was made subject to the express proviso that it not constitute a precedent.

The Chair undertook to reflect upon the interpretation to be accorded to this aspect of Standing Order 52 and to deal with the intricacies of the procedural matter at another time. The Chair is now prepared to share with the House the results of that consideration.

[*Translation*]

Hon. members are all familiar with the provisions of Standing Order 52, by which a member may seek permission to move the adjournment of the House in order to debate a "specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration". These emergency debates as they are known are held only when a number of hurdles as spelled out in Standing Order 52 have been crossed. In particular, Standing Order 52 (2) provides that any member wishing to move the adjournment of the House under the terms of this Standing Order must give to the Speaker, at least one hour before raising it in the House, a written statement of the matter proposed to be discussed.

[*English*]

The items of concern addressed in the procedural exchange on this issue may be conveniently and fairly, I believe, summarized as follows.

First, concern was expressed that when a motion to move to Orders of the Day pre-empts reaching that point in Routine Proceedings at which leave to seek an

emergency debate may be sought, the system is then short-circuited and the opportunity to present an application is not protected.

Second, it was contended that any notices to the Speaker requesting an emergency debate which are precluded from being presented on a given day should be held over and called on the next day when applications pursuant to Standing Order 52 would normally be reached.

• (1120)

In response to the first point I think it should be emphasized that the decision to move to Orders of the Day is one which is made by the House usually on the basis of a recorded division, presumably with full knowledge of the consequences, whatever they may be, of doing so. That being so I do not think it incumbent upon the Chair to second guess the decision of the House and its ramifications, and I would decline any invitation to do so.

As to whether notices of intention to request an emergency debate should be held over and called at the first opportunity, I have severe reservations in this regard.

The specific and important matters requiring urgent consideration, according to Standing Order 52(1), call by definition for immediate action or decision or attention. If that immediate attention is not accorded, it stands to reason that the nature of the matter may change. A delay of even 24 hours may serve either to diffuse or escalate the situation so that it is no longer an emergency or, conversely, it is even more critical. For this reason the Chair is reluctant to institute what would be a new practice of holding over such notices.

This reluctance is enforced by the consciousness that were notices to be held over, some hon. members may for a variety of valid reasons not be prepared to proceed with them on a subsequent occasion.

Furthermore, the Chair is sensitive to the fact that hon. members may wish to retain for themselves the prerogative of resubmitting notices, because in framing each successive application they have the opportunity to capture with precision the changing elements which give rise to the request for an emergency debate and which may bear heavily on the ultimate success of the application.