

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with your ruling, I would like to move an amendment that deals specifically with the question of timing.

We all know that this country and the world in fact face a very important deadline on January 15, when we will have to make crucial decisions about war and peace. We know that there is a great deal of apprehension among the Canadian public about that decision. It is a decision that should not be made without Parliament sitting at that time.

There is a number of precedents. The French Assembly has already decided to come back on January—

**Mr. Speaker:** I know that the hon. member will not be surprised if the Speaker rises to say that the object of the exercise of the hon. member rising is to present the amendment and not to present debate, important as his comments may be.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I did it only to assist the House in understanding the reason for this amendment.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Speaker is most appreciative that the hon. member's comments were only designed to assist the House, but I would ask the hon. member to put the motion.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "Monday" and by substituting the following:

"January 14, 1991, provided that at any time before the said date, the Speaker may fix a time at which the House shall meet either in accordance with the provisions of S. O. 28(3), if public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time; or after consultation with the government, for the sole purpose of granting Royal Assent for any Bill or Bills, after which the House shall stand further adjourned in accordance with this order; and provided that, if hostilities commence in the Persian Gulf area or appear to be imminent, the Speaker shall immediately set a time not more than 48 hours thence for the House to meet".

This is a way in which Parliament will be allowed to present itself as the forum for decision making, not the cabinet, the ministers or the Prime Minister but the people of Canada, through their elected representatives.

• (1710)

**Mr. Speaker:** The amendment that the hon. member has moved is, of course, an understandable one. It is directed to meet a very serious matter which our country, along with other countries, faces.

I do not think it will come as too much of a surprise that the hon. member will find that the Speaker has to look very carefully at the wording in this amendment. Quite frankly, there are procedural difficulties with it. I am going to read the last four lines of the amendment:

—and provided that if hostilities commence in the Persian Gulf area or appear to be imminent, the Speaker shall immediately set a time not more than 48 hours thence for the House to meet.

That may be a very commendable thing for the Speaker to do, but that is not the task I have to perform at the moment. I say, with full understanding of why this amendment has been put forward, that these lines introduce a new concept into the motion relating to hostilities in the Persian Gulf area. To my mind, the consequence of that is that it introduces a new concept and enlarges the scope of the motion. I am afraid I have to rule it out of order.

While there may be a number of citations that I could give the House, if hon. members will refer to the volume, *Decisions of Speaker Lamoureux* on page 313 and 314, they will understand why I have to make the decision that I have made.

**Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, taking into account the time of year, I am certainly in no mood to challenge the learned and wise decision of the Speaker.

I would suggest that, under the circumstances, if it is only the last phrase that gives the Speaker some problem that portion of the motion could be deleted and the other part could be left standing. This would change the date simply to January 14, as opposed to February 18. While it does not give us quite the same scope, flexibility, or discretion for Parliament to act, I would still hope that Parliament would be prepared to come back on January 14, considering that would just be the day before Mr. Bush's January 15 deadline.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member is probably aware that might be a very practical way of meeting the objectives of the hon. member and the Official Opposition, but it would require consent.