

Government Orders

statement in the House today on Cambodia, an issue that we all agree is very important.

At that time, as House leader for the New Democratic Party, I alerted our external affairs critic that this was happening, enabling him to prepare his remarks. This was the plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have a point of order from the member for Montreal—Saint Denis. Of course I will give the floor back to the member for Kamloops.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification from you on the Standing Orders. Permission was sought for unanimous consent, which was refused. I do not see what we are discussing now. It is a debate that is continuing. If we want to debate the question, I would really like to participate. But permission for unanimous consent was refused by one of the parties. I am not going into their reasons; I am saying that permission was refused. So let us go on to what we should be doing now, because we are getting into a debate between the Right Hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and the NDP. This is not a procedural issue. It is a debate we are getting into. If you want to allow a debate, I intend to take part in it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Denis is right when he says that unanimous consent was sought and refused. I saw the Secretary of State for External Affairs as perhaps trying to make another attempt to obtain unanimous consent, and that is why I intend to allow the hon. member for Kamloops at least to say what he has to say following the representations by the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say that we did appreciate the gesture of the Secretary of State for External Affairs this morning alerting the opposition parties of his intention to make a statement.

We prepared ourselves to respond accordingly in the usual traditions of the House. That is why we were quite taken aback. I must give credit to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader in that he may have been anticipating that the New Democratic Party might do something today to frustrate the government's efforts to discuss the goods and services tax. Having made that assumption, there are a number of

other places during Routine Proceedings when he could have moved the motion that he did to go directly to Orders of the Day. He chose not to.

As a result of his decision he sabotaged the efforts of the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In other words, he made the decision that we would not deal with this statement today. I regret that decision. We were prepared to respond to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We were anxious to respond to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, but the government itself made it impossible for us to do that.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

GENEVA CONVENTIONS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs) moved that Bill C-25, an Act to amend the Geneva Conventions Act, the National Defence Act and the Trade-marks Act, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill C-25, an Act to amend the Geneva Conventions Act, the National Defence Act and the Trade-marks Act, and to offer a few comments on the importance of this legislation for Canada.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Speaker, the world entered a period of armed conflict. The Second World War caused destruction and indescribable suffering in many parts of the globe. Atrocities were committed against the weak and defenceless, and the war affected even the most helpless and the most innocent. This terrible experience proved once more that the concept of total war is intolerable.

Certain forms of protection, which previously had received only formal recognition, were now given very serious thought and considered to be important principles of international humanitarian law.

In the immediate postwar era, codifying humanitarian principles consisted basically in developing concepts that were to become part of the international law that is binding on all States. The so-called Principles of Nuremberg became a statement of standards that all States and all individuals were to observe at the outbreak of war.