

Non-Confidence in Deputy Speaker

mentioned had been considered but we had concluded, for the reasons I mentioned, that it would not be the right way in which to proceed. The hon. member for Yukon must not persist in saying that, although I rose to point out that we were against that proposal, I was in favour of it.

Mr. Nielsen: I will certainly accept the explanation given by the minister, but I think he could now rise and state unequivocally whether the suggestion referred to by my hon. friend from Peace River could have been followed by the government.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): It could have been followed, but I would ask the hon. member to reflect a little. If we had done so, we would have been censured for bringing forward a resolution with regard to something which was not even in existence—with regard to something which was wholly hypothetical. Had we proceeded in this way we would have been condemned, and rightly so.

Mr. Nielsen: I would agree with the Secretary of State for External Affairs if, either by his decision or by the decision of the Prime Minister, that had been done unilaterally. But as one hon. member has indicated—I believe it was the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, but I am not sure—consultations could have been carried out among the parties in the light of a serious international situation such as this requiring urgent action within 48 hours. The appropriate course would have been to conduct conversations with the leaders of the other parties so as to determine whether there would have been unanimity. And, no doubt, unanimity would have been obtained had those consultations taken place. In the light of such consultations, the course suggested by the hon. member for Peace River would have been an acceptable one to the house and the government would have incurred no censure, because prior agreement would have been obtained.

The error committed last Friday is not that of the Deputy Speaker, nor is it the error of all the members of this house sharing the responsibility equally. Responsibility for the error lies with the government and, more particularly, with the Prime Minister because it was he who placed the Deputy Speaker in the position in which he found himself. He was in the unenviable position of having to expedite a motion presented by the Prime Minister to meet an urgent international situation and in doing so, because of the pressure put on him by the situation he had to meet, and because of the ill-conceived procedure which had been decided upon by the Prime Minister and the government, he

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

was placed in a position which has made him the object of a motion of censure. The error was generated in the first instance by the Prime Minister and by the government. That is where the fault lies. I say this because there were alternative methods of procedure which could have been followed. The Prime Minister should not have placed the Deputy Speaker in the position in which he found himself on Friday night.

As a result, the rules were abused. In the words of my hon. friend from Peace River, the rules were mutilated. The Deputy Speaker was merely an instrument in the hands of the Prime Minister in this instance. Had it not been for the bungling of the government in this situation, the Deputy Speaker would never be facing this motion today.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether the hon. member would care to accept a suggestion from the Chair. Before very long it will be five o'clock, and I did suggest to the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) that he might have the privilege of replying. After all, it is his motion. If we go beyond five o'clock, this matter will come up again tomorrow, unless we have unanimous consent—

Mr. Gregoire: No.

Mr. Speaker: —to go into the private members' hour.

Mr. Gregoire: No.

Mr. Speaker: I was wondering whether the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) would care to bring his interesting remarks to a conclusion in order to give the hon. member for Lapointe an opportunity to reply.

Mr. Howard: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I think you inadvertently referred to me bringing my remarks to a close. I did not have the floor; I was not engaging in the debate; I do not intend to do so.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen).

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I have not heard that there is any intention of the mover and the seconder of the amendment, nor the hon. member for Lapointe, to withdraw the motion. This is a course which we think should be followed. In the light of the absence of any such withdrawal, I think hon. members should express views, if they have them; and I understand there are further views to be expressed on this matter. But I personally will bring my own remarks to a conclusion very shortly.

One more facet that I want to deal with before I resume my seat, Mr. Speaker, is