

Point of Order

informed at 6.45 that this motion would be votable. So I do not quite understand the point that is being made.

Mr. Hawkes: That is not true. We went to the table. It was embargoed. They wouldn't tell us.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): In any case, the government really is the author of its own problem.

It designated Wednesday as an opposition day, and then on Tuesday undesignated it. We knew there would be two days before March 26, as we have heard and, by deduction, that Friday would be an opposition day. It was agreed that it would be a New Democrat opposition day.

• (1140)

If we had not had the revocation of its commitment to have Wednesday as our supply day, then this problem would not have arisen. Neither would it have arisen if the government had designated today as an opposition day.

It is really a problem within the government House leader's office, rather than anywhere else.

On the point about the arrangement made last April, this was clearly a special arrangement. Mr. Speaker, you alluded to this. There was a clear understanding that once the House began again in January, we would start with a fresh slate and there would be eight votable opposition days in the 1990 year. I think if you reviewed the special order, Mr. Speaker, you would find that that in fact was the case.

As with all these matters, they are open to the normal method for negotiation and discussion. That would have been an appropriate way of addressing it.

I think the matter is quite clear. Tomorrow is a New Democrat opposition day. It is a votable day. I think we are faced with that quite clearly.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, you had asked what was the intention of the House orders that were passed. You asked if there was a willingness on the part of the opposition to give up two allotted days.

In fact what happened with those particular special orders was that the opposition was given two additional allotted votes during that time cycle. To refresh the

memories of hon. members, the reason it was done was to accommodate the fact that the House came back later because of the debates that had gone on before. This was an assistance to the opposition.

I think it is very important, too, to take a look at Standing Order 81(14) which provides for four votable allotted days in any one time period.

It goes on to state: "—provided that not more than eight opposition motions in total shall be motions that shall come to a vote during the three supply periods provided—".

We believe that the supply period runs from September to June. It commenced in September. There have been six allotted days which came to a vote prior to the December timeframe, plus two more that we have had since that time, in February and in March. As a result we have come to the maximum of eight which is allowed under Standing Order 81(14).

I think it is very clear that that in fact was the intention.

The Speaker also asked me the question as to whether or not in the special order this was addressed. In fact, it was not. The issue was silent. As I understand it from our side, there was certainly no intention to put us in a position of having to face additional votes in this second timeframe. There has always been that provision for a maximum of eight. It was an intention on our part to accommodate some of the earlier days back in September to make sure that the opposition did have those allotted days.

We believe that our arguments do stand and that in fact the eight days that are allowed by the rules to come to a vote have already happened. We believe on that basis that Friday definitely could not be an allotted day.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond to my friend from the New Democratic Party, who may or may not be aware of this. I want it made absolutely clear that as the government whip and as a House officer I have certain responsibilities in this Chamber related to votes. As such, I approached the table last evening somewhere between 6.20 and 6.30 to make an inquiry as to whether a votable opposition motion had been presented to the table because I was aware of the notice provisions.