

Government Orders

This was something new for me when I attended the Madrid Conference. I learned how everything had to be agreed to by consensus. When the conference could not even agree on the agenda, they stopped the clock. Here we were into the next day, but the clock said no, we were still back in the day preceding. These are all techniques that they have at their disposal.

CSCE has been, and should continue to be a vital venue for Canada's international activities. We must expand our activities within the framework. At the same time, we must let it be known to Canadians that this venue is available to us to use for the benefit of global and domestic security. Unfortunately, little has been known about the whole process and how we fit into it. Even less has been known about how we as Canadians are bound by those same principles and codes of conduct that we expect other countries to abide by.

It could only enhance our lives were we to appreciate that, right down to the fundamental freedoms and the right to equality, each and every one of us is protected, and each and every one of us is a beneficiary.

In closing, I would like to offer, again through the parliamentary secretary, that this motion be expanded, or at least be understood that the Secretary of State for External Affairs will open this process to public dialogue among all Canadians who want input, whether it be through the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade or through a subcommittee.

For the Madrid Conference, Canada played a very vital and leading role because prior to the conference, we did strike a subcommittee, getting input from all the various interest groups; from Canadians who come from these countries, and a report was written and submitted. This report is still referred to today.

I think it is time again that we heard from Canadians who have immediate relatives or friends in the Soviet Union, in eastern Europe. I think this is what Parliament is all about, to listen to the grassroots Canadians. Based on their input, let us then develop a meaningful, responsive and responsible foreign policy. Maybe this is an initiative that the parliamentary secretary could take on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Kamloops on a point of order.

Mr. Riis: There have been discussions, and I think you are aware of the discussions that the first round of speeches of 20 minutes was agreed to. Unfortunately, our spokesperson has joined his colleagues from the government and the official opposition at a press conference and will be here momentarily.

I wonder if it would be acceptable to everyone if our next speaker would speak for only 10 minutes and when the round comes around again to the New Democratic Party, we would have 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree. Perhaps the hon. member for Kamloops could get tapes of the previous two speeches so that the critic could see them before he gives his speech.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and a delight for me to speak briefly on this motion in the name of the Secretary of State for External Affairs with respect to CSCE, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, where Canada belongs in that organization and where we see that organization going in the future.

Just to repeat very briefly what has already been said, while Canada is a North American nation it has always had very strong ties to Europe. Most Canadians who are knowledgeable on the subject of that aspect of international relations would classify themselves as Atlanticists.

I think we realize and truly appreciate that the cultural and ethnic background of an overwhelming majority of Canadians is European and that in that regard we have extremely close ties on a personal and social basis with Europe. We also have very strong ties politically and economically, particularly in matters of international trade and commerce. Also in the field of investment there have been very active transactions across the Atlantic for many, many years.

I suppose our first baptism of fire, literally speaking, in terms of European involvement, came with World War I, in which we acquitted ourselves with great distinction, honour, bravery, and courage. In a couple of days' time once again we will be recognizing those eventful years and the great effort and great sacrifice made by so many Canadians.