

motions, but when we move amendments to opposition day motions suddenly it is a little different.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, the other thing is this: if it is your intention to make a ruling with respect to the matter, I respectfully suggest that matter ought to be argued in full by the person who objects to the amendment. I suggest there should be a corresponding argument from those of us who support the amendment and that this matter not be allowed to be raised in this way.

● (1310)

As to one other point made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, he says we could have done it on Tuesday. Mr. Speaker, this matter is so important that the one way we could ensure there will be a vote on it and that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and his colleagues will stand up for parliamentary democracy was to do it the way we did it today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The hon. member cannot have it two ways. I am in the Chair's hands as to whether or not an argument is to be made now. If an argument is to be made now, then I think the hon. member should put his objections first and I will then make the argument.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I understand the feeling of the hon. member, but he knows that the Chair does not have to pass judgment on the merit of the motion or of the amendment. The purpose of a procedural debate on the acceptability of the amendment would definitely and strictly be to debate the question of relevancy which has been raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. That point had occurred to me even before the hon. member raised it in the House. There is difficulty with the amendment. There might be some precedents in this House so far as special debates are concerned, such as the Speech from the Throne or on motions to give second reading to a bill. But we are dealing right now with a very limited motion which urges the House to come to a decision on a recommendation of the Berger report. At first glance the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition seems to bring in a new subject, or subjects.

Mr. Broadbent: That is a total red herring.

An hon. Member: You mean a blue herring.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I want to understand the right of an hon. member to make a procedural argument to enlighten the Chair, but I find it is also the responsibility of the Chair to be fair to other hon. members who wish to participate in the debate on the subject matter of the motion and not to lose the time of the debate on a procedural argument.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mackenzie Valley Pipeline

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So, with the agreement of hon. members, I will reserve my decision and at this time and I would welcome arguments by one member from each party. Otherwise, hon. members cannot prevent the Chair from making the ruling immediately. I want to be fair and I invite arguments from hon. members, but this day has been set aside for the opposition. The opposition has decided to give the right to one opposition party to present a motion. As hon. members know, a procedural debate could take up hours, and I think this would deprive hon. members who want to participate in the debate from doing so. So I could either allow procedural arguments to be made immediately, if the House so agrees, or we could hear them later in light of the fact that some hon. members are out of the House for lunch. I hope, however, that the arguments put forward are limited, and I leave that to the judgment of hon. members.

Mr. Broadbent: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of this debate, I would like to suggest, through you, to other members of the House that if there is to be further procedural discussion we would be happy with the ruling as soon as you want to make it, sir, and not contribute further to the discussion. If there is to be any further discussion, I suggest that we postpone it to the end of today's debate.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt the motive of the leader of the New Democratic Party behind his suggestion, but I would say that we have to give some order to the proceedings of the House because it goes right to the root of the matter of the relevancy of speeches of members of parliament. I think it is most unfair and improper for a suggestion to be made—that is the essence of the suggestion made by the NDP, and I do not suggest that the motive is improper, but it would amount to the same thing in terms of the House—that members be put in the position of making a speech which might turn out to be irrelevant on a motion which may be ruled out of order.

So I should call Your Honour's attention to the fact that there is no lunch hour today and I certainly have no objection—nor, I am sure, does the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre have any objection since he has amended so many of our motions—if there were an arrangement to ensure sufficient time, at the end of the day perhaps, to replace the time that was taken up in arguing the procedural matter. I think it is extremely important to the whole business of opposition days. The whole business of amending opposition day motions has not been commenced by our party; it has been commenced by the very group which now complains.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goodale: You get as good as you give.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I do think that even if that is the case, no one should be allowed to rise in the House and say he thinks the matter is irrelevant, and then sit down having advanced no argument at all. Then a person who is defending the motion is put in the position of presenting a point which has not yet been propounded except in the most general way.