

*Columbia River Agreement*

standing order 26 for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the statement by the Canadian chairman of the international joint commission that Canada's interests were sacrificed by the government in signing the treaty for the development of the Columbia river. May I speak to this motion, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would be interested in hearing the Leader of the Opposition, who asks for leave, on the question of the urgency of debate on the subject matter which is proposed, which I see to be the statement of the Canadian chairman of the international joint commission that Canada's interests were sacrificed by the government in signing the treaty for the development of the Columbia river. I take it that what the Leader of the Opposition is asking leave to debate is that statement.

**Mr. Pearson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the argument governing this matter of urgency and importance is to be found—and it has often been quoted in this house—in Beauchesne's fourth edition, citation 100, paragraph 3, which reads:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but it means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the house do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

It seems to me that the circumstances under which this motion is being moved are similar in many ways to those which existed when the motion was moved last June for the adjournment of the house to discuss the dismissal of the governor of the Bank of Canada, and at that time, Mr. Speaker, you agreed to that motion.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in present circumstances there are no ordinary opportunities to discuss this subject, and I believe that the subject is of such great importance that it should be discussed at once.

Leaving aside the circumstances of the dismissal of a man who has served Canada with such distinction in war and peace—

**Some hon. Members:** Order.

**Mr. Pearson:** I believe, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. member is making a statement which goes beyond what he is asking the house to discuss.

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** Not at all.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** And there was no dismissal.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** That is a matter of debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** The urgency of debate is related to the matter which is set out in the hon. member's motion, namely the statement of the chairman that Canada's interests were sacrificed.

**Mr. Pearson:** The urgency of the matter is related, I submit, to the importance of the statements made by General McNaughton and the contradiction of those statements by the government, statements which are of great national and, indeed, international significance; because when a man in General McNaughton's position says that Canada was sold out and that the Columbia river treaty amounts to servitude in perpetuity of our vital rights and interests, surely when a statement of that kind is made—

**An hon. Member:** By a Liberal.

**Mr. Pearson:**—that statement should be debated in the house at once, particularly as that statement, and other statements which I could have mentioned, have been denied and contradicted by the government. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, surely this is a subject for immediate debate in order to get this matter of both national and international importance cleared up.

So far as the opportunity of debating this matter in the ordinary way is concerned, there are eight or nine items that have been listed by the house leader as the business of the house for today and they, of course, do not provide any opportunity for discussing this matter. Second, Mr. Speaker, there is no item listed on the order paper, especially under government orders, that would provide an opportunity to debate this subject.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, because of the uncertainty created by the Prime Minister's utterances, as recently as Saturday night, about the early dissolution of this parliament, there is no assurance that this matter can be discussed in the house. In view of this uncertainty we may not be here after tomorrow night. Therefore, in view of this uncertainty which has been created by the Prime Minister and members of the government, in view of the importance of this matter both nationally and internationally, and in view of the statements which have been made and contradicted, surely the government will be only too anxious to have it debated at once, and that is the purpose of this motion.

**Mr. Green:** Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I hear the Secretary of State for External Affairs I would like to ask a question of the Leader of the Opposition—

**Mr. Pugh:** Which he will never be able to answer.