

Government Orders

There are many events going on at the present time, some are of critical importance. I think the House has been handling matters with the kind of despatch that many of us have—

Mr. Friesen: Longed for.

Mr. MacKay: —longed for, as my colleague says. So I would urge that the Chair consider the matter, taking whatever time the Chair needs in order to bring clarification to this particular situation.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the House leaders are meeting at this moment to discuss the business for the rest of the week and what may or may not happen.

I am sorry that I missed the intervention of the hon. member.

Normally, what we do when we have completed a couple of pieces of legislation and people have had adequate opportunity to speak, knowing full well that we would normally start Private Members' Business at five o'clock, is that we would seek the consent of the House to suspend until five o'clock. I am sure that in this case the hon. member, knowing his care for the institution and his experience in it, will not have a major problem with that.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I would certainly like to assist the government in dealing with this apparent paralysis of the institution.

There is, as I understand it, legislation pending which deals with the question of firearms control in Canada. If the Minister of Justice wants to come into the House now and bring that legislation forward, we can debate it right now and deal with it. The people of Canada want this legislation. Let us bring it on now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérin: Madam Speaker, I would like an undertaking from the government that the notice of motion in the name of the Minister of Justice which concerns the constitutional question and urges the legislative assemblies of Manitoba and Newfoundland to proceed with ratification of the Meech Lake Accord will not be tabled either today or tomorrow.

[*English*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House puts the Chair in a very difficult situation.

Our Standing Orders are very clear. Government Orders are to be debated until five o'clock, at which time the House will proceed to Private Members' Business.

If the government does not present some business, the Chair normally, as the hon. minister said, would ask for consent to suspend the sitting until five o'clock. I have asked for that consent. I have not received it as yet.

There seems to have been an understanding at one point that if a short recess were called hon. members could speak together and hopefully come to an understanding.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions. I can tell the Chair that we are prepared at this moment to proceed with Bill C-74, the amendments to the Fisheries Act.

We have chosen that particular bill because the minister is here. I want to assure hon. members that it is not our intention in any way to complete second reading of that bill, but simply to make sure that the House has some valuable work before it until five o'clock when we can proceed with Private Members' Business. I want to assure hon. members of the other parties that we will co-operate in keeping the debate alive until five o'clock.

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[*Translation*]

FISHERIES ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans) moved that Bill C-74, an Act to amend the Fisheries Act and to amend the Criminal Code in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I thought the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead was here to work. He has already left—

An hon. member: He has gone—

Mr. Valcourt: In any case, Madam Speaker— Aha, he was hiding behind the curtains!