

I believe the Hon. Member is going beyond the rules contained in the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member will of course have heard the intervention by the Parliamentary Secretary. While the Chair, because it is an important issue, gives a certain amount of latitude in the presentation of the application, I am sure the Hon. Member would take the comments under consideration.

Mr. Axworthy: I was attempting to present a reason to Your Honour in light of the statements made yesterday in the House that the matter would be considered further after the proceedings. I was simply drawing to the attention of the House what those proceedings were or were not, as the case may be.

I believe that the timing is of essential and critical importance, because we still have before us a number of major unanswered questions to which obviously many Canadians want answers. Until we have an emergency debate, it is clear that we will not have an opportunity to receive them.

Mr. Speaker: I want to express my appreciation to the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) and to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) in raising again today an important matter. I do not think there is any question but that it is considered important, not only by Hon. Members in this place and the Government but, of course, by the public.

Yesterday I said, and I quote:

I have given this matter a great deal of consideration and I agree with both Hon. Members that the issue is of extreme importance. At the moment it is not my disposition to order an emergency debate for today, but that does not mean it might not be ordered at some other time. I think it is fair to say that I might be in a better position to consider the matter again after today's proceedings.

Later, in response to a point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry who was seeking some elucidation of my earlier comments, I said:

The representations of the Hon. Member are, of course, important. I said earlier that as of 11 o'clock this morning it was not the disposition of the Chair to order an emergency debate to take place today. I think I made it clear to representatives of both opposition Parties that that does not close the door to other applications at another time. If the Hon. Member or other Hon. Members wish to make other applications, the Chair will, of course, consider them.

I have again given serious consideration to the applications which have come in from both the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party, and I must remain of the same view as I was yesterday, that I am not at the present time disposed to order an emergency debate.

This is an ongoing matter and, as I indicated yesterday, events may change and I may be disposed at another time to take a different position.

I hope all Hon. Members and the public that is watching and listening to this will realize that a matter can be of very great importance, but it may not necessarily be deemed appropriate by the Chair for it to be debated in an emergency debate.

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

I see that the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) is here, as are the Leader of the New Democratic Party and very senior representatives of the Official Opposition. I would say to all of them that there are other means by which this matter might be debated. I would suggest that they might have certain consultations among themselves in that regard.

● (1230)

Again, my disposition today should not be taken as saying that this particular subject might not at some later time be the subject of an emergency debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. McMillan that Bill C-74, an Act respecting the protection of the environment and of human life and health, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was making some comments on Bill C-74, the Bill which the Government calls the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, though I believe that to be a misnomer. However, I had not completed my remarks when we moved to Statements by Members and Question Period.

At that time, I was pointing out to the House that this is the first environmental Bill to be introduced in the House for debate by this Government in its three years in office.

In the fall of 1985, nearly two years ago, the so-called St. Clair River blob came to public attention. At that time the Minister, responding to concerns raised by environmental leaders throughout Canada and to questions raised in the House by Members of Parliament, said that he planned to bring in an environmental contaminants Act which would clean up this foul, putrid mess. He said that it would do more than that, that it would solve other problems as well. He told us that we could expect that this planned legislation would deal with matters relating to the Niagara River, that there would be legislation which would help us deal with old waste dumps and that something would be forthcoming to deal with the pollutants that pour forth from a variety of factories across Canada.

In December of 1985, the Minister put forward a Bill which we did not debate. In his vain fashion, he called the Bill the toughest pollution legislation in the western world. That Bill died on the Order Paper, and the following June another Bill was introduced. This time the tough guy lines that had been scripted for the Minister had to be changed and we got a different story. Instead of the toughest pollution legislation in the western world, this time we got just a first step toward