

MOTIONS UNDER S.O. 31

SALE OF CANNED TUNA

Mr. Speaker: I am in receipt of two notices under Standing Order 31. I propose to hear them in the order in which I received them. The Hon. Member for Egmont (Mr. Henderson).

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 31, I ask leave to move that this House do now adjourn for the purpose of discussing an important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the decision of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) to permit the sale of tainted tuna.

Mr. Speaker: I am in receipt of a similar motion from the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly).

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I also ask leave to seek adjournment of the House to debate a matter of urgent and pressing necessity concerning the withdrawal of a product which has been identified as a matter of serious health concern and safety to the Canadian public. It is apparent that the Armed Forces removed and disposed of that product and it would be in our interest to deal with that issue as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Speaker: That is somewhat different from the notice the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) sent me. I take it he would like me to deal with what he sent me which is the requirement under the motion.

I gave quite a lot of thought to this matter. I think the Speaker is always in a difficult position on these questions. I think I can conclude from today's Question Period that the matter has had at least a substantial airing. In that context I would find it difficult, given all the circumstances and given today's Question Period and the attention it has received, to find that the matter would qualify for a debate under Standing Order 31.

I remind Members that they may wish to look at other rulings to see what constitutes an emergency and what constitutes a question of urgency for debate. But I did think, listening today, that given the questions and answers which have aired the issue which needed to be aired, and there is no question about that, in that context I find it difficult to find that Standing Order 31 applies.

Mr. Deans: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you would take under advisement and perhaps comment at a later time on the difficulty that would confront members of the Opposition if in a matter that was deemed by them to be a matter of urgent importance they chose not to raise it during Question Period and how that might influence the decision of the Chair.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Shame.

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Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans)—

Mr. Nunziata: That is logical.

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not logical. The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain is in fact using a point of order to comment on a ruling of the Chair, which he knows is improper.

Mr. Deans: I know.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Unworthy.

Mr. Speaker: He knows that. I think I know why he is doing it, because I think I sensed from Question Period the seriousness with which this issue is taken by every Member of the House.

Mr. Riis: We thought it was serious.

Mr. Speaker: The point the Speaker must take into consideration is the degree to which there is, *prima facie*, a perceived emergency. What I—

Ms. Copps: A million cans of tuna.

Mr. Kempling: Shut up!

Mr. Speaker: Some Members may think it is reasonable to interject at all times no matter who is speaking, but I do not.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kempling: That is stupid, Sheila.

Mr. Speaker: What is not helpful on one side is not helpful on another side.

The dilemma I face in all of these situations is whether I perceive any emergency to exist. I am not suggesting that the raising of the question in Question Period eliminates an emergency if one should exist, nor would an emergency not exist if questions were not asked in Question Period. The question is: Has the information that I have on which to make a judgment been changed, added to, altered, augmented or modified in any way by what I have just heard in the last hour? What I am suggesting to the Hon. Member is that I have found that the information I now have on which to make a judgment includes all the press reports, Question Period and everything I have seen, and it suggests to me that the emergency issues contemplated very narrowly in Standing Order 31 are not met.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I respectfully ask you to consider for future decisions the matter of the proper interpretation of the relevant Standing Orders. I am not talking about your current decision, but since this is something which comes up quite frequently I would respectfully like to ask your consideration of the following brief comment. Subsection (5) of the relevant Standing Orders says: