

*Montreal Postal Dispute*

House under Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely, the new situation created by the final breakdown of negotiations between the government and the Montreal postal mail truck drivers and the announcement of the government to hire a new staff tomorrow to replace the present employees, which will bring great hardship to them and may lead to a complete disruption of mail services with its consequent serious effect on the entire population of Montreal.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. members who have heard the proposed motion will agree, I am sure, that this motion is deserving of the most serious and careful consideration. The substantive aspects of the matter which is suggested for discussion later today under Standing Order 26 cannot be overlooked and their importance cannot be minimized.

At the same time, the decision which the Chair has to make in such circumstances is essentially a procedural one, taking into account the limitations prescribed by the Standing Order.

Some weeks ago the hon. member for Peace River proposed the adjournment of the House under Standing Order 26 for the purpose of discussing the postal situation in Montreal. This motion was granted and a debate ensued. Then on April 6 the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands asked leave to move the adjournment of the House to discuss the Montreal postal situation and, to quote the hon. member, "the need for Parliament to consider alternative courses of action". This motion was denied, having regard to subsection (d) of section 16 of Standing Order 26 which reads as follows:

(d) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter which has been discussed in the same session pursuant to the provisions of this Standing Order;

Thus, the Standing Order prescribes that there can be only one emergency debate about a given situation during a session of Parliament. On this basis, the proposed motion had to be refused. The ruling of the Chair did indicate that there may be a point in the course of a developing situation where new aspects, new factors or new facts would justify a second debate in the sense that the House would then be dealing with a new situation.

The question to be resolved in this respect is: when does a continuing emergency become a new emergency so that a debate would not

in effect revive discussion on a matter which has already been discussed in a previous emergency debate? The answer is not entirely clear to me in the light of the circumstances as they exist today.

Without reaching a conclusion on this aspect of Standing Order 26, I remind hon. members of the other difficulty provided by the Standing Order. The rule enjoins the Speaker to consider whether the matter can be brought before the House within a reasonable time by other means. Since it has been agreed that there will be a continuation of the budget debate tomorrow, I cannot ignore the fact that this will automatically provide an opportunity for debate within 24 hours. I do not see how the Chair can overlook this aspect of the relevant Standing Order. Therefore, taking into account mainly the fact that there is an opportunity for debate as early as tomorrow, I must conclude that the motion should not be put today. At the same time, I can assure hon. members that I will not feel so strictly bound by subsection (d) of section 16 of Standing Order 26 that an emergency debate on the situation might not be possible later.

**Mr. Lewis:** May I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope Your Honour will forgive my presumption, but may I ask Your Honour whether you took into account the fact that the situation with respect to the truck drivers in Montreal is that by midnight tonight the present situation will end and new employees will be hired. Therefore a debate tomorrow might not serve the purpose that a debate at eight o'clock this evening might.

● (2:20 p.m.)

**Mr. Speaker:** Of course the hon. member has to assume that the Chair has taken into account all circumstances. As he will realize, and as all other hon. members will realize, this was not an easy decision to reach. I felt, all things considered, that perhaps there should not be an emergency debate today. I thought that the procedural difficulties under the terms of Standing Order 26, for today at least, were insuperable and that the Chair should not be placed in the position where these two very serious roadblocks could be ignored in the present circumstances. I realize how touchy the whole situation is and I am hopeful that a decision that there should not be an emergency debate today will not adversely affect the development of the situation in Montreal.