

Point of Order

We had certain questions relating to the government's original resolution in the sense that it did imply that there would be a blank cheque, if you like, or a mandate given for further action on behalf of the government. We raised that with members opposite, with the Secretary of State and with others. They were most forthcoming in providing, by way of written assurance, that they would be seeking a UN resolution and mandate as well as, and I think this is very important, ensuring that Parliament would be consulted in virtually all circumstances. That was incorporated as part of the amendment.

I have been on both sides of the House and I have participated in literally hundreds of debates. I know from experience that when there has been that sort of dialogue across the House and a mutual agreement made to find a way of resolving some of those differences so that there can be some common ground, that was the basis upon which the resolution was put forward. I think that the amendments and the revisions the government is proposing are certainly acceptable to our side and we would like to proceed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I think that yesterday I said in no uncertain terms what I thought about this matter. As we approach the end of what to me is a non-debate, since as far as I am concerned, the debate ended Thursday night, some incredible things have been going on in this House. I would like to reserve comment on the statement made by the Speaker this morning until tomorrow. There are no two ways about it: either I do not understand or I understand all too well. I would like to think about it until tomorrow. I did not exactly appreciate the tenor of the debate this morning when the Speaker made some comments on yesterday's ruling. I support the decisions of the Speaker. It is not up to the Speaker of the House of Commons to tell us he may have gone too far. He handed down a ruling yesterday. I want to analyze very carefully what he said this morning and get back to it tomorrow, if necessary.

What I fail to understand, and I hope my colleagues will understand that this is not a split between the parties— I can hear the hon. member, to whom I always refer as my esteemed colleague from the New Democratic Party, saying: another split among the Liberals.

• (1510)

It is not a matter of division but of knowing what is happening. I never saw a debate get so complicated. What exactly is going on? Everyone has an opinion on the subject. I don't understand. I refuse to take part in a debate on such an important matter, with all the wheeling and dealing that is going on, some of it public, some of it private, some of it between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and a few members. This is not the way to approach such an important matter. I will say no more. I won't commit myself. The hon. member said there might be consultations this afternoon. I will be reasonable. Get on with your consultations! I am going to stay here in my seat until the division at six o'clock. I intend to stay here all afternoon. I will see what happens.

Get on with your negotiations, but don't ask unanimous consent for something you might decide to do this afternoon, but which is still up in the air. Mr. Speaker, I know there will be a division at six o'clock on a motion. I regret the unanimous consent given last Friday. We will vote accordingly. Now, get on with your work, do as you please, but I am going to stay here and watch this semi-public, semi-private business. We will see, once and for all, whether we are able to conduct our business here in this House, in full view of the Canadian people, because I think they will soon want to know what really happened in this debate. Thank you.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to comment that I don't think the proposal made by the hon. member for the New Democratic Party is reasonable, considering the fact that earlier, the hon. member from Winnipeg made a great show of being magnanimous, claiming that all this had taken place with the full co-operation of all concerned. Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do it was all done with the greatest possible secrecy. Like the hon. member for Saint-Denis, I wonder who has an interest in this conspiracy of silence, this last minute conspiracy involving a couple of members and the minister. What is going on in this House? Why are Canadian public and hon. members being kept in the dark?

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but the debate is now on a different subject. Perhaps the hon. member will have another opportunity to air his grievance.