

Emergencies Act

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I, too, have to take a moment or two to register a concern. It is the July 11, and of course once the Government decided to set aside the Standing Orders and to sit in July to conduct government business, we are required to do so. To conduct the business of the House of Commons in a business-like way we need advance notice to enable all sides to plan accordingly. That normally happens, but when it does not happen I think one has to raise a concern. I am a bit puzzled. The Deputy House Leader stood up just a moment ago and said that because we had a prolonged procedural debate this morning, he had decided not to proceed with the procedural debate on the abortion motion.

I was informed this morning, prior to the House of Commons sitting, that we would not be proceeding with the abortion procedural debate. I am curious how the Government House Leader knew at that point that we would be taking up some time in a procedural argument. Other than the fact that there obviously seems to be some confusion with the Deputy House Leader, I want to say to him that to enable us to work as efficiently, as effectively and as positively as we can, it is absolutely necessary that we get some forewarning to allow, not only ourselves as House Leaders to prepare but more important the critics to prepare and to be aware when in the agenda of the day they will likely be participating in a debate. I make an appeal for order to enable us to conduct the business of this House in the most orderly way possible.

● (1210)

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate the comments of both the Hon. Member for Windsor West and the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap. However, both Members while registering a complaint have certainly made it clear that it is completely within the authority and aegis of the Government to set the order for each day. In this respect, the Government is completely within its rights.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EMERGENCIES ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Defence) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-77, an Act to authorize the taking of special temporary measures to ensure safety and security during national emergencies and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof.

He said: Madam Speaker, let me just thank the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn). It had been my intention to allow him to speak first and then to respond but it is probably more appropriate for me in moving the motion to speak now.

This will be a very short intervention because Parliament has had the opportunity already both in the Senate and in the House of Commons to debate this legislation. I will say that this is a very momentous day for Canada. With the acceptance of these amendments and the passage of this Bill from the House of Commons, we will see the abolition of the War Measures Act in Canada. Never again will we have a situation, as was the case in World War II, where Canadian citizens were interned on the basis of their racial ancestry. What we will have is a situation where there will be guarantees. Never again, for example, will there be the ability to use the War Measures Act to knock on the door in the dark of night, to sweep up our citizens, to hold them without charge and without the right of habeas corpus. What we will have, Madam Speaker, is a new and modern piece of legislation, one that is adequately safeguarded, one which protects the rights of all Canadians and one which gives to the Government the ability to protect the lives of Canadians, to keep them safe and to ensure that every Canadian has adequate protection in times of crisis.

As the House will know, Canada is virtually alone among modern western jurisdictions in not having this sort of flexible legislation. As a consequence, acceptance of these amendments and passage of this legislation will bring Canada into the 20th century. It will prepare us for the future in terms of the needs of this country.

I might simply mention that the Government is prepared to accept the two amendments which have been proposed by the Senate. One deals with the issue of conscription. While the Bill as it was passed unanimously on third reading in the House of Commons would have allowed conscription to take place by Order in Council, it would have simply maintained the *status quo* which existed under the old War Measures Act.

In the two instances where we have had conscription in the past, even though it would have been possible to do so by Order in Council under the old War Measures Act, the Government of the day felt it was appropriate to introduce special legislation. I would prefer in safeguarding the interests of all Canadians in times of emergency that that power still remain. The very nature of an emergency is such that it is impossible to predict the very dire circumstances which could take place. But I am satisfied that if a balance has to be struck that it is likely it would be possible in times of crisis, if Canada had to go to war, that there would be enough time for us to reconvene Parliament and for us to pass special legislation, if there was consent of the House.

Additionally, there is another minor change made by these amendments, namely, to change the structure of the joint parliamentary committee to ensure representation from both sides of the Senate. We are prepared to accept that as well. It does not go to the heart of the Bill and is something which obviously will reflect better the views of some of the members of the Senate.