

PROCEDURE RELATING TO STANDING ORDER 43 MOTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and it is quite direct. The motion moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by myself, called for four specific measures to which, it seems to me, no civilized Canadian could object at all. It seems to me that the Secretary of State for External Affairs took every opportunity to stop the House from taking a vote on that issue. Therefore my question to the minister is, why did he talk the motion out so the people of Canada, through their representatives in the House of Commons, could not vote on this profoundly important question?

Hon. Mark MacGuigan (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, as members of the House, including the hon. gentleman, know, we have already had a resolution passed unanimously by Parliament this week. We have seven opposition days left between now and the end of March.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: We are going to recess tomorrow.

Mr. MacGuigan: The resolution—

An hon. Member: It was intentional; what a phony.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacGuigan: The resolution which was moved by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, supported by the hon. member for Oshawa, was brought to my attention after I entered the House. I was working my way through it in the process of debate. There are many members of this House who would wish to debate such an important measure because there are many concerns expressed in this very complicated motion which involve non-interference in internal affairs. It is very important for the government, on a question of this kind, to set the bounds with respect to what we may or may not do under international law. We have clearly expressed our view on the crisis in Poland, and I am glad that members on the other side are prepared to do the same thing.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DISCUSSION OF MOTION DEALING WITH POLISH AFFAIRS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I want to put my next question to the government House leader because he knows that under the rules of this House we could debate this matter at three o'clock if the government so decided. Considering that the four points are thoroughly responsible, recognizing the integrity of the Polish people, and are totally non-inflammatory in nature—they pertain to the problem of martial law, the rights of the workers to organize unions, the request that all outside states not intervene in Polish affairs and, finally, they simply refer to a request that we provide some aid in the form of food and other kinds of

Oral Questions

assistance to the Polish people—this is something one would have thought the Government of Canada could have supported without equivocation.

● (1430)

I would like to ask the government House leader if he will agree, under the rules of this House, that we have a brief opportunity at three o'clock to discuss this matter before us. The Secretary of State for External Affairs has just given us one of the reasons for wanting to say no at that time. He will have the opportunity to debate the matter at three o'clock.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): First of all, Madam Speaker, I fully agree with what was said by the Secretary of State for External Affairs. However, I am rather surprised at the request made by the leader of the New Democratic Party. This morning, at a meeting that included his House leader, we discussed the business of the House for today and tomorrow, and no one gave any indication that there was any desire to discuss this matter, either today or tomorrow. In any case, Madam Speaker, the request has taken us somewhat by surprise. Again, I agree with the statement made by the Secretary of State, but we could still set aside tomorrow as an opposition day, when the leader of the New Democratic Party or a representative of the Progressive Conservative Party could present the motion if they are really serious about it. In the circumstances, I am ready to consider this possibility. For today, the order of business was set on the basis of discussions we had with the House leaders a few hours ago. No one mentioned this request to me at the time—this is the first I have heard of it—and I think it deserves serious consideration. If the members on the opposite side want tomorrow to be an opposition day, I am prepared to give the request serious consideration.

[English]

REQUEST THAT HOUSE REVERT TO DISCUSSION OF STANDING ORDER 43 MOTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I normally respect the government House leader—and I mean that—in his dealings with the parties on this side of the House, but considering that the meeting that he referred to this morning involving House leaders of all the parties could not have dealt the government's reaction in advance to a motion which was moved in this House at two o'clock, I say with all respect that the argument he has just made is totally irrelevant.

An hon. Member: You are playing politics.

Mr. Broadbent: I would like to ask him is he now prepared to discuss with his colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the possibility of reverting at three o'clock to this very important subject, if there is agreement on this side