

Routine Proceedings

This morning we asked—it was not offered—for a briefing session by someone in authority in the government, so that we could be informed as government members were informed in caucus. They have information we do not have, Mr. Speaker. It is unfair to have a debate when someone has all the information and others do not.

All we asked was for the sitting to be suspended until 2 p.m., so that Liberal, NDP, independent and other members could obtain the information available. That is not too much to ask, Mr. Speaker, but the answer was no.

[*English*]

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, my proposal last night was that we should have these discussions among ourselves prior to suspension. That did not happen because of the request of the opposition that we suspend.

We are now here in session this morning. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, we carry on. We can have the kinds of discussions I offered to have last night with opposition House leaders and anybody else.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I know the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway is rising. Given what I am going to say, it may not be necessary for other members to get into this debate. I would ask the attention of the House.

The situation that we are in today is that, as a consequence of consent of all parties—all of it being sought last evening—we adjourned until 11 o'clock today. We are now, according to the rules of this place, in Routine Proceedings. The exchange that has just taken place may well have been helpful but it is certainly unusual at this point in Routine Proceedings.

I am bound by the rules, as are we all, and, in the absence of consent or some kind of arrangement, my obligation is to continue with Routine Proceedings until Routine Proceedings are completed. I want everyone to understand that, unless some arrangement is made for something different to happen, I will call Government Orders and the hon. member for Kitchener will have the floor. Now that is the procedural position that we are in.

Given the fact that there seems to be some disagreement among members as to what we might or might not do, if Routine Proceedings or other things later on today are to be changed, I would ask the co-operation of hon. members to let me proceed with Routine Proceedings.

Members may want to have discussions. The hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway may very well want to have those discussions, but I must say that there should be some limit now on what is beginning to turn into a debate and getting well beyond a point of order. I will hear the hon. member very briefly.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

I wanted to raise a very serious matter that certainly flows from the previous discussion and that is with respect to the right of members of the House to be informed in a serious way about what is happening in this very, very serious war.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member makes a point probably which is agreed to by all other hon. members, but as I said, if I am going to indulge one hon. member, I will have to indulge other hon. members.

I think that it is appropriate now to seek the co-operation of the House and to let me proceed with Routine Proceedings. Members can discuss this matter among themselves. I am not so sure that, at this point, anything is to be gained by negotiating across the floor of the House, at least for a few minutes.

I intend to proceed with Presenting Reports from Inter-parliamentary Delegations.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND
INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to committees, if I may, just very briefly.

I have just learned that there is a strong possibility that the commitment that was made earlier for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Minister of National Defence to appear before the Standing Committee on External Affairs this afternoon may be denied. Surely, Mr. Speaker, Canadians and members of the House are entitled to be briefed by the Minister—