and debate this matter as a matter of priority—surely that ought to be put in a question so that members can address themselves to that very point as a matter of procedure.

Therefore, these considerations remain as loose ends. As I have said, on three previous occasions they have been a problem for the Chair. This is at least the fourth occasion. On every one of those occasions, on October 26, 1976, February 18, 1977, and December 16, 1977, we ran into similar difficulties. On one occasion we had a vote. On another occasion the proponent of the motion was talking until the appointed hour for the beginning of question period. By talking in support of his own motion, in effect he deprived himself of the opportunity for a vote. On some of those occasions in the past, at the conclusion of question period the situation was rectified with the consent of the House.

There is no procedure which I can invoke at this time to return to the consideration of the question we had before us at 2.15 this afternoon. It was interrupted by the question period. In our practices we cannot change from one item of business to another without the adjournment of the item before the House and asking the agreement of the House to move to another matter. Having done that at 2.15, surely we cannot then return at three o'clock without the agreement of the House in some form. Therefore, in my opinion, we are powerless to return to the consideration of this matter, unless we do so by unanimous consent. In fact, on a previous motion put by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), this was the case. We agreed to a debate of limited proportions, but that was done clearly with the consent of the House. I have no authority to direct that. I am bound by the fact that at this time we are facing the calling of other proceedings described in the standing orders, and I do not have the authority to direct us back to this motion, unless the House consents. At the moment I do not have any vehicle through which to determine that consent.

I think this matter ought to be set over along with the other matters of substance which were raised by virtue of the proposals by the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings and the hon. member for Vaudreuil. I hope the parties will agree to an early discussion of this. Frankly, I think it can be resolved only by some changes in the rule, something which will have to be done by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. I hope that the House leaders will agree to an early opportunity for full discussion of these points raised today so that we can address ourselves to this problem which, after all, is a part of our daily proceedings and therefore a problem of great urgency.

● (1612)

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, just so that the record is clear, I would like to reply to the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister and House leader (Mr. MacEachen). The reason that we have had this hour-long procedural debate is because an agreement was broken. I had put the proposition to the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) that I would be putting my motion under Standing Order 43 today on the agreement that there would be no debate. It was a non-contentious and non-partisan issue, and for that reason the government agreed by unanimous consent to having it put.

The point is that, unfortunately, certain developments occurred which prevented that motion from being put for final resolution. I just wanted to clear that up, that it was the government side that broke the agreement and got us into these difficulties. I understand that the government is not prepared to allow equity in terms of participation in debate. I wonder, in the interests of good sense and fairness, whether I could move at this time that my motion under Standing Order 43 be now put for final resolution, without debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: This is more in the nature of a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) states that we have gone against an agreement that he is supposed to have made with me. He mentioned my name. He talked about the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister. I never gave my consent, or the consent of anyone else since I could not do so, for the motion to be accepted without debate.

All I said to the hon. member, in his own language, when he came to see me in the government lobby a few seconds before two o'clock, was that as far as we were concerned, contrary to what we must usually do because of the nature of the motions moved, I would not object to this motion being moved, I would not say no if unanimous consent were needed for this motion to be moved, and I would ensure that no one on our side would say no when you ask: Is there unanimous consent for this motion to be moved? This was the only agreement between the hon. member and myself. Therefore, when he suggests to the House that I have gone back on an agreement, I must point out that the hon. member is wrong and that I am sure that if he is misleading the House, it is unintentionally. Perhaps in his mind—I cannot say for sure—he did not want us to debate this matter. It is not my place to guess what he was thinking. However, in all honesty, since he mentioned my name and referred to to an agreement against which I am supposed to have gone, I want to formally deny this charge. All I said in English was:

[*English*]

All I agreed to was that I would not say no to the putting of the motion, and that nobody on our side would say no. If the hon. member is pretending that he talked to me about not debating the motion, I am saying to this House that he is not telling the truth, and I deny it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House will realize the very great difficulty that we are in here. First we have the difficulty when in fact one of these motions is accepted. It is a difficulty we have faced two or three times in the past. None of us is clear on how it can be handled. I have to take the best course I can, pursuant to the rule, and it is the same course I have taken in