

Garrison Diversion

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I ask for the co-operation of the House? We now face a situation which some of us have anticipated for some time. It has now become a reality. A motion presented under the provisions of Standing Order 43 having been put with the consent of the House, debate on it has commenced. That debate was interrupted by another procedure of the House pursuant to a Standing Order.

Two interpretations are possible for the moment. I noted at 11.25 that only one or two other members seemed to be interested in participating in the debate. One of them, the mover of the motion, will close the debate. Perhaps the co-operation of the House may be forthcoming in bringing that debate to a rapid conclusion, particularly as everyone who wants to participate in the debate is anxious to agree.

That being so, it may give us the opportunity to explore more fully the conflict which arises from two interpretations. One of those could be based on Standing Order 45(2) which says that when a debate on a motion is interrupted for another purpose, it is to be transferred to government orders. The second interpretation could be based on a parallel with private members' hour, which in my opinion could be applicable. It is the rule that when an order of the day or a motion is under debate in the House and is interrupted by the private members' hour, that debate is automatically resumed at eight o'clock. There are two parallels. I do not think the House is disposed to argue them without preparation. It may be that after consultation the difficulty can be clarified for the future.

● (1210)

For the moment, I wonder if I might see one or two of those members who were anxious to make a brief comment before the question period was called, and then call the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre to conclude the debate. The two hon. members who had the floor earlier were the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain and the hon. member for Lisgar; and then, of course, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It would be acceptable to the House leader for the government—

Mr. Fairweather: Wherever he is.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am acting House leader.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: I would simply stress the admonition that you made, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is indeed a very interesting one, and that if you proceed now to hear two further speakers who have been recognized by the Chair the debate will have then been concluded. Any difficulty that may be related to the interpretation of Standing Order 45(2) in the face of the Standing Order which deals with private members' business could be disposed of at some future time. On that specific understanding we would be ready to accept two additional speakers.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Andras.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have only indicated that, in the circumstances which we face, I am seeking the co-operation of the House. If I in any way call the motion and resume it, I have taken that responsibility upon myself. Once I do that it is a debatable motion and there can be no limit. I am only asking for the co-operation of the House. If there is to be any disagreement about that manner of proceeding, I would just as soon take a point of order and made a declaration now as to whether I am to be governed by another proceeding whereby this matter, now having been adjourned automatically by a Standing Order, will be transferred forthwith to government orders and debated when it is called again by the government. If the co-operation of the House is not to be forthcoming in concluding in the way I have suggested, I would just as soon hear the point of order and argument, and then I will make a final decision. Once I call it, if I do, it is open-ended because it is a motion before the House for debate.

Mr. Blais: On that point of order, Mr. Speaker, there is no consent from the members of the opposition. Therefore, we would like to call a bona fide point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order the hon. member for Timiskaming was seeking the floor, and then the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I have great sympathy with the problem of solving this point of order without considerable debate. I appreciate the remarks made by Your Honour. I do not appreciate the remarks made by the deputy House leader who is indicating his support only if two members are called. All members will co-operate with Your Honour. That is likely the way it is going to be. However, I am violently opposed to the suggestion that was made by the deputy House leader that two speakers would be recognized and then the debate would be finalized. We have great respect for Your Honour's judgment and ability, and will agree to that proposal. I will not agree to the alternate proposal.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, as I read the rules, I thought there were only two ways to cut off debate, namely, by Standing Order 33 and Standing Order 75C. I did not know there was provision for a Standing Order deputy House leader to cut off debate. This is a debatable motion. I think the parties in this House will be responsible in terms of the length of the debate. However, I do not think it lies in the mouth of the deputy House leader to decide for all of us in this House of Commons when debate is going to end.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I thought this was a chamber of reasonable free speech, notwithstanding what the hon. member for Nipissing, the Postmaster General and now the duly appointed Standing Order 33 and Standing Order 75C expert, decides with respect to this matter. The matter is important and urgent because of the imminent departure of the Prime Minister. I think it is debatable and ought to be debated.