

*Point of Order*

that that was the end of the matter and that there would be a vote, in fact three votes, on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

At approximately 10.20 on Friday morning, things changed. With respect to my colleague from Saint-Denis, it is important to be very clear as to the basis for that change.

My colleague, the Whip for the New Democratic Party, was approached, not by the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader, but by a rather breathless deputy House leader of the Official Opposition, the member for Kingston and the Islands. That member urged my colleague, the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, our Whip, that the House agree to the speedy withdrawal of the original motion which was before the House and, in turn, indicated that this was the subject of the earlier agreement. My colleague, the Whip, was not present during the earlier discussions and assumed, in good faith, that in fact there would be an opportunity, as had been agreed previously, to put the amendment. On that basis he agreed, as did the Whip of the Liberal Party. That was the basis for this substitution to which the hon. member for Saint-Denis refers.

When I learned of this, and I did not learn of it until some time after the decision was made, I immediately approached my colleagues, both the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader and my colleague and friend, the member for Kingston and the Islands. I pointed out to him that the earlier understanding had clearly been that there would be an opportunity to vote on the subamendment, which we had put before the House.

He indicated, and I appreciate his undertaking, certainly that was his understanding.

**Mr. Milliken:** No, I said I did no know.

**Mr. Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands indicated—and if I am misstating what he said, he can certainly rise in his place—but, during my conversation with him, it was my understanding that he indicated he was not aware of the fact that it had been agreed that the subamendment would be put as part of an earlier package. I think that is a fair summary of what the member has said.

I have subsequently discussed this matter again with the Parliamentary Secretary to the government House leader. He has indicated that he is in fact prepared to

allow the subamendment to be put to the House. I would certainly hope, and I assume that the member for Saint-Denis would share my view, that the Official Opposition as well would agree to that which was in fact the original understanding.

The final point that I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, is this. I did consult this morning first thing with the Deputy Clerk who was very helpful. She indicated that of course the House is the master of its own proceedings and, if the House wishes to proceed by unanimous consent, it can do so. I want to emphasize the profound danger of this approach when the House has agreed to defer a vote following debate on a particular item then, whether by unanimous consent or otherwise, to change the nature of that vote after debate has concluded is very dangerous. Again, I recognize that, while it may be procedurally in order, I would certainly hope that this is not something which will ever be repeated in the House again.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint-Denis, who is one of the most senior members here, has risen on a matter and is supported by the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway on matter which I think is very serious indeed. I think it is serious because debate took place on a motion, the vote was deferred and hon. members expected to be voting on the motion that was debated. For reasons that we do not need to go into, by consent, the motion was changed. That means that hon. members will go to vote on a different motion than that which was debated. I very much regret this.

The hon. member for Saint-Denis has said that an abuse of Parliament by consent is just as much an abuse. We are at a time when the country is watching this institution very closely. Much of what the country sees, it is not happy with. All of us are going to have to make a much greater effort to give an example that is in keeping with the great traditions of this place, in keeping with the history of it, and in keeping with what I think most of us want this place to be in the hearts and minds of Canadians.

The hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway has stated correctly that the House can by consent do what it wishes. The reason that that is so is because ultimately this is the place where the people of Canada have sent all of us to do what we think is in the best interest of the country. If the House agrees and there is consent, then no matter what other rules we may have or whatever