

*Point of Order*

I appeal to you, in the interest of parliamentary order and in the interest of getting this debate before the House, that you reconsider the decision not to go to Standing Order 52 today, as is called for in our Standing Orders on Routine Proceedings.

I would like to state in conclusion that my fear is that the government with its majority could at any time that it knows that there is an emergency and that there is likely to be a debate, because we sometimes advise the government that we are going to want to discuss a specific issue, could render this Standing Order absolutely useless when, during Routine Proceedings a member of the government has the floor and moves that we proceed to Government Orders. I find that a bit difficult to accept.

The government will use its majority to prevent debate on a very important question put to the House by a member of this House. In other words, any time the government wants to use its majority to thwart the process and avoid discussing an emergency, it could move that we proceed to Government Orders. In my view, that would not be in keeping with what I would call democratic process and I would object strongly to that procedure.

Therefore, I plead with you to reconsider the decision not to call motions under Standing Order 52 in Routine Proceedings as is normally done and to ask that the letter tabled by the member for Beauséjour be considered today and a judgment made on his request for an emergency debate on the fisheries situation in the Atlantic provinces.

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be very brief on this issue. I think it is an important issue. I think all members of the House would recognize that members have a right to raise an issue that they feel is an emergency requiring a special debate and I think we ought to keep in mind, too, we are just returning for a session of Parliament and in that spirit, I think we want to maintain as co-operative and friendly an atmosphere as we can.

I think we all appreciate the government's decision to call for a vote as a result of a concurrence motion yesterday. The government had two choices as I see it. One was to move that we proceed directly to Government Orders, which the government did. Another alter-

native would have simply been that the present debate now adjourn and we move back into Routine Proceedings.

We had some discussion, as a matter of fact, between myself and the parliamentary secretary and we recognized that these were two options. The government chose one. As a result of that action, we were not able to get to the point in Routine Proceedings where hon. members could raise their cases calling for emergency debates on the Rafferty-Alameda Dam environmental situation, the situation in Ethiopia and the crisis in the east coast fishery.

Rather than argue whether or not we can interpret Standing Order 52 in such a way that would permit us to raise those questions now, could we not simply agree unanimously in the spirit of co-operation that at this point we allow those members who have submitted letters indicating their intention to rise and make a case for an emergency debate to have an opportunity to do so and get on with the agenda and the business of the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** I know that other hon. members may wish to rise. Perhaps I can keep them from going through extensive argument by commenting on the application.

First of all, this matter may be resolved very easily today. Because we have to make a decision about this quickly, I do not want to give an incautious response.

Without definitively saying what the rule calls for, we should remember we have on the floor of the House now notice of only one application. It is the custom of the Chair not to comment on any other applications that the Chair receives until the member filing the application actually rises in his or her place. I know hon. members will understand that. In view of the fact that both the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and the hon. member for Kamloops have indicated that there were a number of applications yesterday, I think I can refer to those applications as the applications that I received yesterday.

As it turned out, the government did move for Orders of the Day so it was not possible for me to rule on those applications. That could have been easily remedied perhaps without any need for argument if the applications had been refiled today.