

Non-Confidence in Deputy Speaker

third fact is that the presiding officer, the Deputy Speaker, was of the opinion that unanimous consent had been given earlier.

I do not want to take a lot of time on this matter. I think we would be making another serious mistake if we attempted to place all the responsibility on the presiding officer at that time. I think it would be good for parliament and perhaps good for the future if the suggestion made by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was accepted by the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) and he withdrew this motion, because I can appreciate the difficulty that the hon. member for Stormont (Mr. Lamoureaux) will have if any significant number of members vote for the motion, even though it may be defeated.

I think this points up something else, that perhaps we need to revise the rules to deal expeditiously with matters that require quick action in cases of emergency. I do not want to go into the details of the emergency that was facing the parliament of Canada on Friday night, but I think that in retrospect most of us will agree that the action taken was wise and was needed immediately. We can look back on what happened and not really have any objection to the action that was taken but at the same time I think we must admit that there was a transgression of the rules.

That is all I want to say, Mr. Speaker. We in this party are willing to accept our share of the responsibility and to accept the statement of the Deputy Speaker that he was of the opinion that consent had been given.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, needless to say, in this particular instance I approve the statement made by my leader with regard to the position we will take, and for several reasons, but there are some observations which I think should be made. I could not vote for the motion if for no other reason than that I would consider I am estopped. I was here. I had the same opportunity as did the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and every other member to express my opposition to what I considered were several obvious breaches of the rules. I do not know whether I will go as far as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre did and assume guilt. However, if I did I would say that the guilt might well be apportioned according to the degree of knowledge that hon. members have of the rules, in which event I would certainly yield to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, who is a great authority on the rules and so must assume the greatest share of the blame.

Mr. Knowles: The hon. member is very kind.

Mr. Baldwin: However, I think we should be grateful to the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Gregoire) for bringing up this matter so that we can have a full and useful discussion and so that in parliaments yet to come those who examine the record of Friday the 13th day of March will not feel they are bound by what happened then. As far as I am concerned, I felt embarrassed and futile in the face of several instances of mutilation of the rules, not only those which have been referred to but one or two others as well. True enough, it was in a good cause, but do good ends always justify the means to achieve them?

This parliament is the highest tribunal in the land. We make our own rules; we change them, we alter them. There is nobody to say us nay, save only for our duty to see that the business of parliament is expedited and that the rights of individual members are maintained. This is the golden currency of our procedure, and I do not think anyone who was here on Friday night can deny that that coinage was badly debased.

Let us put this matter in perspective. There was no necessity for the government, in law at least, to secure approval of the house or approval of parliament. I think that the provisions of the National Defence Act relating to our contribution to the United Nations are such that this need not have been done. However, I think the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) was quite correct in the course he followed.

On an earlier occasion when he laid out the five conditions which had to be met before a force would be dispatched to Cyprus he said that parliament would be consulted, depending upon the size and constitution of the force. I think this constitutes an admission on the part of the government that they knew they did not have to come to parliament for legal approval, but in matters of this kind I think it is proper to do so. In my view it would be highly improper if it had not been done.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are at least two ways by which it could have been done without exposing us to what happened on Friday night. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has pointed out one method of procedure, and there was certainly another very simple one. As the course of events in Cyprus proceeded on Monday or Tuesday or even on Wednesday, it surely must have been obvious to the government, who had sources of information not available to other members of the house, of course,