

Finance

sideration, and whether an opportunity to discuss it in a satisfactory fashion is likely to come up in the ordinary course of business of the House in the near future.

● (1622)

Having examined both of those provisions, and the other relevant provisions of the rule, I have initially come to the conclusion, subject to what I am about to say regarding paragraph (16)(a) of the rule, that all of those conditions appear to be met by this matter, which indeed is a matter of great importance, and an important matter involving the administrative responsibility of the government.

However, I think I should refer briefly to the provisions of paragraph 16(a) because they have formed an important part of the decisions under this rule in the past, that is, the right to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of this rule is subject to a number of conditions, the first of which is, under subparagraph (a):

The matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration;

In the past I have had occasion to set aside applications under this rule on the ground that the matter was a continuing problem and not one of an urgent nature. Certainly by taking a very restrictive stance in respect of the interpretation of the word emergency in that subparagraph I could very easily frustrate the operation of this rule altogether.

However, as I have also said many times in the past, there is one very important aspect of debates pursuant to Standing Order 26, and that is that they are always on a topic that is immediately relevant, of attention and concern throughout the nation, and therefore provide members of this House with an opportunity to discuss matters of importance at a time when they are immediately relevant and on the mind of the Canadian public.

Therefore I am reluctant to take too restrictive a stance in such a way as to frustrate the operation of the rule, for I have said in the past that if a rule is on the books it obviously means there are occasions on which it must be permitted to precipitate a discussion. Yet, in order to do so, I am called upon to make a value judgment, it seems to me, as to whether or not a situation is an emergency.

Of course the provisions of the rule are such that I cannot hear any argument. Invariably in situations of this sort the basis of the very central argument that will occupy most of the debate quite probably is that the matter is not in fact an emergency, but is a regular occurrence and has been treated in the ordinary and regular way. Certainly those are the answers that have been given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) today.

It seems to me, therefore, that the Chair is in a rather invidious position. To take too restrictive a stance, again, as I say, would mean it would be almost impossible to get the benefit of this rule and to bring the House to a discussion of a matter which is important and requires urgent consideration, although it is not necessarily an emergency or a crisis, as the words have been used.

[Mr. Speaker.]

In the particular circumstances of this case, and I think everyone will understand that each case has to be examined on its own merits, having satisfied myself that every other aspect of Standing Order 26 has been met, and having some doubt in terms of the application of paragraph 16(a) and the specific word emergency, I have concluded, after very serious reflection, that I ought to give the benefit of the doubt to the applicants in this case in order to precipitate a discussion of this very important matter in this House this evening.

In accordance with paragraph (8) of the rule I am obliged to ask whether the applicants have the leave of the House. In these circumstances both the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby have made applications to put a motion, the text of which is formalized by the rule, so fortunately I do not have to pick and choose between those motions. The motion will be "That the House do now adjourn", and it would be my proposal to consider that the motion, when it is taken up, will have been moved by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. Clark: That is certainly agreeable.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with the terms of the rule I see no reason not to invoke the provision for setting the debate at eight o'clock this evening. I am obliged by paragraph (8) of the rule to ask whether the hon. members have leave of the House to proceed with the debate at that time. Shall the hon. members have leave?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to quarrel with your decision, but on a point of order—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The only question now is whether the hon. members have leave to move the motion. If not, I have to ask whether they have the support of a certain number of members. Do hon. members have leave to put the motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: If there is any question as to whether they have leave I am obliged to read paragraph (8), which is as follows:

If Mr. Speaker is satisfied that the matter is proper to be discussed, the member shall either obtain the leave of the House, or, if such leave be refused, the assent of not less than twenty members who shall thereupon rise in their places to support the request; but, if fewer than twenty members and not less than five shall thereupon rise in their places, the House shall, on division, upon question put forthwith, determine whether such motion shall be made.

Do the hon. members have leave to put the question later this day?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

An hon. Member: No.