

*Privilege—Mr. Knowles*

and its subsequent adoption by the House, or the subsequent ruling by Mr. Speaker Jerome, would not be known to any single member of the government and would not be known, for example, to the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) who was the government House leader when these rulings were made. Yet the Deputy Prime Minister, the former government House leader, did not intervene when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was giving the House an assurance that the committees were "masters of their own destiny", or when the government House leader was giving us the assurance that the committees had the right to decide whether or not their proceedings should be televised.

What concerns me, Madam Speaker, is that I believe the House has been seriously and, in my view, deliberately misled. I can come to no other conclusion. I accept the word of the government House leader, as obviously I have to do under the rules, and I accept the word of the Prime Minister, but we have not heard from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) as yet. Did he know of the existence of this letter? We have not heard from the Deputy Prime Minister. Did he know of the existence of the letter?

**Mr. Chrétien:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member should know that I did not know of it until around 2.20 this afternoon.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. If the minister wants to rise on a point of order, he can do so, but he cannot raise a question of privilege while someone else is speaking on a question of privilege.

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, obviously I will accept the intervention of the minister and I will withdraw without equivocation—

**Mr. Lalonde:** Disgusting. You are casting aspersions right and left.

**Mr. McGrath:** It would be interesting to know whether the hon. gentleman who now intervenes from his seat knows of the existence of this letter because he is obviously the author of the face-saving compromise which the government House leader brought before the House this afternoon to try to save face.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have rarely seen in this House behaviour as disgusting as the one shown by the hon. member.

**An hon. Member:** Watch yourself.

**Mr. Lalonde:** It is quite clear that just as no one on the front benches on the other side was aware of your letter, no one on the front benches on this side knew of this letter. The way in which the hon. member is casting aspersions right and left is reprehensible, and he should be ashamed of it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. McGrath:** Madam Speaker, what I find reprehensible is the fact that the Prime Minister and the government House

leader could stand on their feet in the House, time and time again, and tell the House, without equivocation, that the committee had the right to decide whether or not it should televise its proceedings, notwithstanding the fact that there had been rulings on record, and that these rulings were not known to either the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister or the government House leader. That boggles the mind; it stretches credibility. I am informed that one of the rulings was made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) who was then chairman of the Special Committee on the Constitution.

The fact remains that we are now told we may be able to reach agreement, if we can find money through the commissioners of internal economy and if it does not delay the proceedings of the committee. We are told these things now, but we were not told these things last week. Last week there was no suggestion that there would be any strain on the finances of the House or on the commissioners of internal economy, or that the televising of the proceedings of the committee might unduly delay the committee. No, on the contrary, we were told without equivocation that the committee had the power and the authority to decide whether or not to televise its proceedings and that the money was available.

I want to point out to Your Honour, in the strongest possible terms, that I feel aggrieved as a member of this House. I believe that I have been misled. Whether or not I have been deliberately misled is a question for Your Honour and subsequently, we hope, for the committee to decide. But the fact is that there is a serious prima facie case of privilege before the House right now and I submit that Your Honour should so rule.

**Madam Speaker:** I recognize the hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent). I am sorry he was disappointed that I did not recognize him before, but I recognize members in the order in which they rise. It is the turn now of the hon. member for Oshawa.

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Madam Speaker, I want to deal with this very important question of privilege. I do so in replying to what I regard as a logically absurd and, beyond that, morally offensive argument put forward by the government House leader, and I choose my words with care.

First of all I shall speak with regard to his question about a letter written by you, Madam Speaker, dated August 13, containing the following words in the last paragraph:

Although I am personally very sympathetic to the endeavours of your Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped, it is my opinion that any committee seeking to televise its proceedings must first get the authorization of the House.

● (1620)

The government House leader is a lawyer and I am not, but I have spent a little time studying legal theory, as a matter of fact. I know enough, when the Speaker of the House of Commons writes a letter in her official capacity to the chairman of a committee saying that it is her opinion that such is the case, whatever the government House leader may say, that