

precedent by which Members would be prevented from attending an *in camera* sitting of that committee, notwithstanding the good intentions that were obviously there in this case. It is a dangerous precedent, one which should be discontinued.

Just as any Member of the House of Commons has the right to enter the Chamber, every Member has the right to attend the meeting of a committee of the House. If we are not extended that right then I strongly suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that an individual Member would be denied the powers given to him or her upon his or her election to the House. It is really that part of the deliberations of a committee which I find the most objectionable, notwithstanding the fact that there were good intentions involved in this case, at least I believe they were, knowing the calibre of the Hon. Members who sit on this committee. Notwithstanding that good intention there should be a review of this procedure by the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure to ensure that there will never be a repeat of the process whereby a committee of the House denies a Member of the House either directly or indirectly the right to be present at any sitting of a committee.

Those are the brief comments that I wish to make. I believe they are important since they concern the rights of every Member of this House, regardless of political stripe. My comments have not been made either for or against the proposition which was considered by the committee in terms of the Hon. Member for Peterborough. There will be another time to discuss that. My comments are made to express the view that all Members of the House should have the power and privilege to participate in any process of this House, which includes attending the deliberations of a parliamentary committee.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks both as a member of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Business and as a member of the Special Committee on Reform of the House of Commons which made the recommendation for this particular process. If I understand the main point of contention put forward by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm), it is that in some way the committee endangered the power of the House of Commons to refer matters to committee. That is the substance of Standing Order 96(1) about which he spoke. I would like to speak to that matter first.

The judgment of the committee with respect to which of the 20 items that came before it were to be selected as votable in my judgment does not, either in theory or in practice, impair the ability of the House to refer matters to committee. We did not choose the Hon. Member's motion because we did not think the House had that power. We had to consider that motion, among others. It was our view that, because of the very reforms which the Hon. Member cites, brought about as a result of the McGrath Committee, committees now have the power to do things which before they only had the power to do when the House empowered them to do so. For this reason, I

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suggest to the Hon. Member that when he invokes the McGrath reforms he is not being completely accurate. It is precisely because of those reforms that the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General has the power to do what it would have been asked to do had the Member's motion been made a votable item and passed in the House.

One of the matters that the committee has to consider, and which we have made no secret we were considering, is that there is a limited number of items which can come to a vote in the House. This is part of the criterion, a public criterion known to all Members of Parliament, which is to say, that we must ask, is there any other way that this matter can come before the House? Is there any other way that either a committee of the House or the House itself can consider this matter?

It is certainly true of what would have been the result of the Hon. Member's motion being passed by this House that that could happen in a number of other ways and that the Justice Committee itself could decide to proceed with that type of investigation.

• (1610)

I say to the Hon. Member, who makes the point about Standing Order 96(1), that I do not think, Mr. Speaker, you can consider that to be a valid point. The power of the House to do that remains. The power of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Business remains to choose a similar motion in some other context, if it felt it should do that. So nothing in principle has been endangered whatsoever.

A number of other things have been mentioned, and with the Chair's indulgence I would like to touch on them briefly. The point was made that Members whose items were not selected as votable items, or in the case of the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) whose item was chosen, did not find this out before it was tabled in the House. I do not remember that there were any complaints about this type of thing the last time, when people found out which items had been selected when the report was tabled in the House. As I understand it, there is no obligation on the part of the committee to give advance notice to Members as to the fate of their Bills. That is what reporting in the House is all about. That is when people find out.

With respect to the question of *in camera* meetings, I acknowledge that it is an exceptional procedure. As far as I know, no Members sought to be present at those *in camera* meetings. There are many decisions made around here, perhaps not committee decisions, but in the final stages of drafting a report the committee meets *in camera*, and that is common procedure. That is basically what we are doing when, after having heard all the Members, we get down to the business of deciding what our final report will be.

I suggest to you that as one of the people who was involved in the reform this system will not work without *in camera* meetings. Others may argue that it is not working, and that is