

debate, and the two members have had a chance to have this exchange under the disguise of a point of procedure.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. HAWKES—ALLEGED FAILURE OF NOTIFICATION OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE STAGE OF BILL C-19

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege related to the government business of yesterday. I sat in this House at 3.30 in the afternoon and listened to the hon. House leader respond to the House leader from this side about the business to be discussed in the House yesterday. I have subsequently had an opportunity to check my recollection by reading *Hansard*. Nowhere in the *Hansard* record and nowhere in my recollection was there any indication that this House would go into Committee of the Whole to discuss the employment tax credit. There was no indication subsequent to that 3.30 announcement.

We had members on this side of the House who wished to address the principle of Bill C-19 during debate on second reading. They were here all afternoon but did not have the opportunity. Acting on what we felt to be the information given to us by the House leader, we had speakers arranged for the evening to speak to the unemployment tax credit bill starting at eight o'clock. We arrived in this House to discover that we were moving through second reading stage and into Committee of the Whole. The opportunity to debate that bill on second reading was lost for many of the constituents in this country because members were not warned that it would happen and they were not present.

Perhaps of more importance, if one checks the record last evening, is that I think it is proper procedure in Committee of the Whole for members of this House to have an opportunity to gather from the minister the information required to make an intelligent decision about a bill and perhaps to move amendments. The minister responsible for this bill was in the House last evening. I suspect that moving Committee of the Whole was a surprise to him. Certainly there was no evidence that he had officials present. If one examines that two-hour record, it becomes relatively clear that the minister did not have the information in his head to answer the very simple questions that were put on occasion; that he did not have the assistance of officials who would have the normal kind of documentation to provide him with the detailed information which this House required; and that that process was an infringement of privileges of all members of this House.

If we are to make this place function as efficiently as possible, then we must have some sense of warning as to the issues which will be debated on any given day and the sequence of events which are likely to occur. I hope Madam Speaker will use her good offices to ensure this kind of situation will not arise in the future.

● (1210)

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, I would like to make two short points on the same question of privilege. I too was in the House yesterday at three o'clock, I was here when the House recessed for the dinner hour, and also when the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod came in to summon us to the other place. I came back shortly after eight o'clock. I was about five minutes late but I had been prepared to speak on Bill C-3, which was supposed to be the bill to be called. I had prepared myself for debate on that matter, only to find that the House was then in Committee of the Whole dealing with Bill C-19.

There are two points I wish to make. First, I was frustrated in my attempt to contribute to informed debate in the House. I think it is an offence against my privilege that I was not given the courtesy by this Liberal government of being notified of its plans. I should not be the victim of poor planning on the part of the Liberal government in terms of its legislative program, or of its discourtesy in not letting hon. members of the House know of the change in plans.

Second, I believe it frustrates members of the House, given the government's stated intent that it wants quality and informed debate in the House, to find the order of business suddenly changed. This frustrates that kind of informed participation, particularly when the House goes into Committee of the Whole. This tells members of the House, in effect, that the government really does not care about the quality of debate, but that it simply plans to go through Committee of the Whole stage. If the government cared at all, it would allow hon. members some time for preparation and would permit proper, informed debate. The very fact that such a thing is sprung on us on the spur of the moment tells me that the government really is not calling for informed debate or participation, but is simply going through the motion. I consider that an affront to all members of the House, including government members, and certainly an infringement of my privileges.

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, may I draw page 1786 of *Hansard* to the attention of the two hon. members who have just spoken, specifically my answer yesterday to a question put by the House leader of the official opposition. It is very clear from what is recorded in the second column that it was possible that we would go into Committee of the Whole yesterday on Bill C-19. What I said was:

I committed myself to my colleagues this morning—

I was speaking of the House leaders.

—that if we were to end the second reading stage of Bill C-19 before five o'clock today, tonight we would switch to Bill C-3—

That was not the case. What that meant was that if we had concluded second reading stage of Bill C-19 before five o'clock, we would have gone to Bill C-3 in the evening. The fact is that at five o'clock we had not concluded the second reading stage of Bill C-19 and, consequently—well, I suppose they are intelligent enough to understand the consequences. I think they were the victims of their lack of attention, Madam