

No. 81

# JOURNALS

OF THE

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

OF CANADA

OTTAWA, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1971

2.00 o'clock p.m.

### PRAYERS

#### RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: On Tuesday, February 16 last the honourable Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) raised a question concerning the regularity or the propriety of a Committee of the Whole sitting when a number of standing committees were scheduled to meet.

The following day, on Wednesday, February 17, the honourable Member raised a much similar question but this time as a question of privilege. While I am not accepting that Member's proposition as a question of privilege, the Chair recognized that there was some difficulty and assured the House that further and continuing study would be given to the situation.

In particular, it was proposed that the procedural difficulty be considered by the House Leaders. It is my hope that these honourable gentlemen will be available for such a meeting within the next few hours, perhaps, or at least the next few days.

In the comparatively brief period at my disposal, I have endeavoured to review the practice of the House in respect of concurrent sittings of the House or Committees of the Whole with standing or special committees. Up to this moment, I have been able to consider, in

some detail, every regular session of our Parliament back to 1952 and there has been little difficulty in establishing that Committees of the Whole and standing committees have in fact sat concurrently throughout those years.

I do not suggest the House should presume that such conditions were unopposed. Senior Members of this House will vouch for the fact that strong positions were taken and many hours were spent over the years in objecting to such meetings on the very same grounds as have been recently advanced particularly by the honourable Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). It would seem that this practice rightly or wrongly has been confirmed by the recent revision of the Standing Orders of the House. I suggest the condition has been accentuated by the unanimous order of the House referring the government reorganization bill to a Committee of the Whole House. While that bill is an omnibus bill the Standing Orders do not provide for the consideration of such a bill in a Committee of the Whole except by order of the House.

While it is apparent that it may not have been appropriate to send that bill to a standing committee it would not have been inappropriate to establish a special com-