

HOUSE OF COMMONS

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Wednesday, December 4, 1963

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. GREGOIRE—COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF
BILLS C-83 AND C-84

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Gregoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

On Monday, July 8, 1963, as recorded on page 1968 of *Hansard*, the Secretary of State (Mr. Pickersgill) made a commitment to some hon. members, and more particularly the member for Lapointe.

At that time I had asked the Secretary of State the following question on Bills C-83 and C-84: If the committee is ready to sit, and the Secretary of State can assure us that it will and sit before the bill is presented, then we will agree to the bill being read for the first time. The Secretary of State answered:

I would be quite prepared to give an undertaking that in some fashion or other this matter would be remitted to a committee so that the matters the hon. member wishes to raise could be raised, if that is satisfactory.

I wish to point out that it was to the member for Lapointe that the Secretary of State was speaking, when he said:

—so that the matters the hon. member wishes to raise could be raised.

The Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing) confirmed that promise, as can be seen on the same page of *Hansard*:

I would confirm the undertaking given by the house leader that we will have a committee set up suitable to the hon. member where these matters can be discussed.

Further on—and here the matter becomes clearcut—the Secretary of State said as recorded on the same page of *Hansard*:

Once these two bills are seen, if there is any demand from any quarter of the house that some of the matters in the bills or other matters related to them could usefully be reviewed by a committee, I will undertake to ask my colleagues to have this done, and I feel sure they would agree with me. In fact, I am quite prepared to commit the government to putting a motion on the order paper for a reference to a suitable standing committee of the house to consider these matters before we proceed with the legislation itself.

Mr. Speaker, I can give further proof of what I am saying by referring to *Hansard* of October 11, 1963, page 3469, left hand column. The Secretary of State said on that date:

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no question that I did make a very precise commitment and I intend to carry out that commitment if there is any insistence on the part of any hon. member that I do so. The commitment was to refer a specific matter—

Mr. Speaker, that specific matter was the frontiers of the Northwest Territories, as it will be seen in a moment.

I continue with my quotation:

The commitment was to refer a specific matter, namely the frontiers, to the consideration of the committee before we proceed with the bill.

Mr. Speaker, those were formal and definite commitments on the part of the Secretary of State and of the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. And I think that at one time the Secretary of State mentioned that it was precisely the matter of northern frontiers that was referred to the committee on mines, forests and waters. Indeed, the Secretary of State stated, a little further:

But if the hon. member or any other hon. member wishes to insist that the matters raised in the debate, that is to say, the question of the frontiers of the territories, should be considered separately first by a committee, I will endeavour to consult with whoever raises objection, the hon. member for Lapointe or anyone else, and try to draft some kind of motion to refer the matter to some suitable committee and bring it forward for debate.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the committee was specifically set up to study that problem. Now, the chairman of the committee, the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Godin) and the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Turner), have violated the commitments—

[Text]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Secretary of State): I think at this point I should raise a point of order. I have been listening attentively to find out what the hon. gentleman was raising as a question of privilege. It is evident now that he is complaining about something which took place in a committee, complaining that it did or did not do something. If that is his question of privilege, that is a matter for the committee itself.