

Motion for Concurrence in Report

I intend to refer the Chair to a number of precedents which may be cited with respect to this particular course of action and to refer in a more general way to our Standing Orders as they bear on this question. Later I wish to make some reference to the relation which certain of our Standing Orders have to the general policy governing the course of action proposed by the hon. member.

First, with regard to the proposal that the House concur in this particular report, I am advised by members of the committee that though the hon. member for Athabasca may be the vice chairman of the committee, neither he, nor the chairman nor any other member of the committee had any instruction to make this motion to concur in the committee's report. In fact, I am advised that this matter was not discussed in the committee.

I think it must be perfectly clear, therefore, that the hon. member cannot lay any claim to be speaking with the authority of the committee when putting forward this motion. The committee arrived at no such conclusion itself. Further, I suggest it is inconsistent with the hon. member's position as vice chairman of the committee to take this particular action. As vice chairman of the committee he is under an obligation to act fairly with regard to all sides.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Hon. members opposite laugh at that, which must indicate a certain attitude on their part with regard to the chairmanship—

An hon. Member: Smile when you say that.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I notice the Leader of the Opposition laughed at that.

An hon. Member: We are laughing at you.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The Leader of the Opposition has suggested from time to time that members of his group might be given positions of responsibility at the committee table, but there is some evidence in his conduct right now to indicate why we should hesitate to accept any of his nominees.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): It is perfectly clear that the hon. member for Athabasca had no right as vice chairman of the committee to take this course of action. He had no instruction from his fellow members on the committee

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

to do so; he is putting forward this motion merely as a private member and not in any official capacity.

The hon. member for Peace River has raised objection from time to time, both here and in the press, to the absence of consultation concerning the way in which the business of the House is conducted. But there was no consultation on his part with me concerning the kind of action—

Mr. Baldwin: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker; on Thursday last I announced publicly in this House to all who were here that I intended to file a notice of motion which would come up in 48 hours.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Here again, we have an interesting illustration of the attitude of the official opposition with regard to consultation. If consultation on House business is to take place through public announcements or press releases we shall not get very far.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Who taught us that?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if the discussion on this matter might be limited to the procedural aspects of it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I was interrupted by hon. gentlemen opposite who perhaps were worried about the merits of their case. I would refer them to the Standing Orders, and may I refer in particular first to the fact that the House, in establishing the Standing Orders, considered the problem of conducting the business of the House in the light of the desirability from time to time of permitting private members to divert the business of the House in order to debate questions of substance which may be of interest to them.

We have several Standing Orders which deal with this question. The first, and perhaps best known, is Standing Order 26, which was amended as recently as last year, and which permits any hon. member to make a motion to divert the planned business of the House for the purpose of discussing a particular public question. As I pointed out, the rights of hon. members in that situation are very carefully circumscribed by the Standing Order.