

Privilege—Mr. Crosby

Commons. I refer in particular to page 6 of this pamphlet where it states:

Notices of committee hearings are sent to committee members and are printed each day as an appendix to the *Votes and Proceedings*—

Yesterday we had quite a bit of discussion about the question of what *Votes and Proceedings* means. I would like to draw your attention to page I of *Votes and Proceedings* for Monday, February 14, 1983. We are informed that the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure will meet, that the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee will meet and that the Public Accounts Committee will meet. Today at or about nine o'clock a.m., our Whip's office was advised that the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs would meet, that the report of the Auditor General to the House of Commons for the fiscal year would be discussed in committee; and then we find that the Agriculture Committee will meet and that the Communications and Culture Committee will meet.

We are making the same point that we made yesterday, and that is that democracy rests on notice. We have no difficulty getting our people to committee meetings when we have notice of them. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that goes for all sides of this House. It is about time that the Members were informed and given plenty of notice as to what is going on. Party bias can then come into play, the Party situation and whether or not you are a Member of the Government or of the Opposition. But I suggest to you that this place has to operate on notice, Mr. Speaker. That notice was not given with respect to those committee meetings.

If we are going to be effective in committee, just as we argued yesterday that if we are going to be effective in the House, we need notice and information. Surely in committee we need and are entitled, as Members of Parliament and as suggested by the Speaker's Office itself, to proper notice. That is our point of privilege.

Mr. Crosby: Mr. Speaker, in response to the suggestion of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans), I am prepared to state my point of privilege in very clear and unequivocal terms, if that is desired. I am prepared to make a motion in relation to that point of privilege which is that I, as a Member of the House of Commons entitled to equal rights with all other Members, did not have the opportunity to serve on standing committee meetings which were called for 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. this morning. Because I received no notification of those meetings, I was unable to be substituted as a Member of any one of those committees that met at 9:30 or 10:30 this morning. I will list them for you, Mr. Speaker. They are Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs; Justice and Legal Affairs; Public Accounts; Agriculture; Communications and Culture; and Fisheries and Forestry, which I attended. I could not be substituted because there was no opportunity for my Whip to provide 24 hours' notice to the Clerk of the House to permit me to become a regular alternate Member of any one of those committees.

• (1115)

By way of a motion, I would suggest that it would be appropriate to refer this matter of the calling of committee meetings to an appropriate committee of the House for study in order to see that all Members have the benefit of the provision that I referred to earlier, Standing Order 69(4)(b), which gives us the right to be substituted on standing committees on 24 hours' notice. That right was unceremoniously and unilaterally taken away from us by person or persons unknown.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, having listened to the points that were made and having read the Standing Orders, I would say at the outset that it may well be a point of order that Members of the House of Commons are entitled to be given sufficient notice to allow them to attend the sittings of the House and the sessions of the committees. Since there is a rule which requires 48 hours' notice on substitution, then the same rule must surely apply to the calling of meetings. Members must be given sufficient time to substitute prior to the meeting being called to order. We were not aware that the committees were to meet this morning. It was therefore not possible for Members who were unaware to be at the meeting. Neither was it possible, under the Standing Orders, to substitute.

The issue here is the unfairness of the situation. It is quite clear that if a Member is not given adequate notice of a meeting, which is 48 hours, in order that he or she may attend, it is not possible to substitute another Member because the Standing Orders do not permit it.

I suggest it is indeed a point of order; I do not think it is a question of privilege. I suggest that the Chair should rule that meetings of committees should be preceded by adequate notice being given to each and every Member so that they can attend or arrange for a substitute to attend in their place. In order for that to occur, it follows that there must be 48 hours' notice of the calling of the meeting.

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, I am willing to meet with the House Leaders within the next five minutes in my office or wherever they wish so we can clarify this situation. We do not insist on having the committees organized this morning. We thought that it was urgent for the House to be able to have its committees working, but if they do not like the idea and would prefer more notice—I am told that Tory Members attended some of those committees this morning and were very happy—and want to undo what has been done, we are willing to discuss it.

Mr. Crosby: Garbage.

An Hon. Member: Who told you?

Mr. Pinard: It was the Tory chairman, as a matter of fact.

I am saying that if the House Leaders who are here this morning are willing to meet with me, let us not waste the time of the House and proceed with debate. We will meet right