

Mines, Forests and Waters Committee

find that it was stated the first time the committee was set up—and it was simply this. The committee proposed travelling to the Chalk River plant of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, and they wanted the power to be able to do that on a day other than Saturday or Sunday. The reason was quite clear in that case. That example has no bearing whatever on the case here.

Mr. Murphy: I again rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure the hon. member does not want to be incorrect. I should like to remind him that most of the meetings of that committee were held here in the House of Commons, and that we were absent from the city for only two days.

Mr. McIlraith: I am afraid I am not able to follow the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murphy: It is a point of accuracy.

Mr. McIlraith: That committee asked for special leave to sit while the house was in session for what the committee thought was a very good reason, what was stated to be the reason and what the house approved as the reason. Today we have no reason whatever given for asking this extraordinary power. We have the rather unusual request that the power be granted as a matter of right for no reason at all.

Mr. Lennard: Then it has been a little bit unusual for the last ten years.

Mr. McIlraith: The hon. member has had his opportunity to speak without being interrupted. If he is not sufficiently mature after this number of years in the house to grant the same courtesy to another hon. member when any matter of business is being discussed in the house, there is nothing I can do about it. I must only acknowledge his right to be here and say that I appreciate that right and will honour it. I cannot refrain, however, from having thoughts about the way he exercises that right.

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to force a vote on the matter, and there is obviously no reason why the other part of the motion should not be separated and granted by the house; that is the part having to do with the printing of evidence.

Hon. Howard C. Green (Minister of Public Works): I think it would be unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, if the remarks just made by the hon. member for Ottawa West to the effect that this is a very extraordinary power were allowed to go unchallenged.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Green: One might take it from his statement that we were attempting to cut down the rights of parliament or were being

[Mr. McIlraith.]

unfair to the opposition. I served on many committees during the 22 years I have been a member of this House of Commons, and during the whole of that time it has merely been part of the regular routine to give a committee the power to sit while the house is in session.

An hon. Member: Under the Liberals.

Mr. Green: And may I remind the hon. member for Ottawa West that on more than one occasion the present government, while in opposition, had a very small number of members and was really in the same position in which he and his colleagues find themselves today. I do not believe, however, that there has ever been any serious objection to a committee having the power to sit while the house is in session; and that power, generally speaking, has only been used when it was reasonable to do so.

Mr. McIlraith: It has only been asked when it was reasonable to ask it.

Mr. Green: Oh, no; the hon. member is wrong in that. Very often he has not been in the house, although he has been the hon. member for Ottawa West, and he has missed a lot of the things which have gone on here.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is very unfair.

Mr. McIlraith: That is a very childish statement to be made by the leader of the house.

Mr. Green: It may sound very childish to the hon. member, but it is very accurate. We gave assurance during the debate on the amendment to the standing orders providing two additional standing committees that it was not the intention to have those committees sit while the house was in session unless it should be necessary, and that is the plan of the government. However, for the hon. member for Ottawa West to attempt to make a hue and cry about the report of this committee, which is identical with the reports of many, many other committees, is going beyond all reason, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that on reflection he will realize that this is only a bit of a smokescreen that he is raising.

Mr. McIlraith: No, that is not so.

Mr. Green: The hon. member for Lambton West is simply carrying out the procedure of this house when he asks for concurrence in this report, which apparently has been agreed to by the hon. members of the committee, among which the hon. member for Ottawa West is not even numbered.