

understand that that in itself is a problem of some magnitude. However, may I reassure the Hon. Member that both the reprint of Bill C-9 and the entire committee proceedings related to that Bill were available to Members, albeit not in their usual printed form. In the circumstances, Bill C-9 was taken up for consideration at the report stage at the first opportunity allowed by the Standing Orders.

If a reprint of the said Bill had not been available or the proceedings of the committee had not been available, the Chair would certainly have informed the House and sought direction. The rules are silent on the form of publication. The Chair hesitates to rule that the proceedings and evidence of a committee must be in their usual printed form before debate on a Bill can proceed. Indeed, the decision to print is a power that belongs to the committees. Could it be argued that, if a committee decided to sit *in camera* and not to print its evidence, debate on a Bill could not proceed in the House at report stage? What if a printing were delayed by a natural disaster or strike? This is a question the Procedure and Organization Committee may wish to clarify when it meets, for the Standing Orders offer little guidance to the Chair.

● (1540)

There is, however, a precedent. I quote Mr. Speaker MacNaughton on March 17, 1965, as reported at page 12479 of *Hansard*: He said:

The basic question is whether or not a bill in the House of Commons can be discussed, assuming that the evidence has not been completely finished in its English and French printing. I have made a search of the records since confederation, and there is no case that says that a bill in the House of Commons which is up for discussion cannot be proceeded with until the evidence has been filed. If we were to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire), emotionally pleasing as it may be, nevertheless procedurally in my opinion it would be completely wrong, and would establish a very bad precedent.

That is a ruling of Mr. Speaker MacNaughton.

The Chair would like to make one or two observations at this point. First, there has been an attempt to improve the printing of committee reports. The delays have been very substantially reduced. The Hon. Member for Edmonton West referred to delays of up to a month. I can remember that when I was first elected to the House that was far too usual a practice. Thanks to modern technology and improvements—I would like to think in the administration—the delays have now been reduced.

The present occupant of the Chair is sympathetic to the argument and the concern. I might add that I have not been in a rush to make any final decision, bearing in mind that these transcripts were not available. They were available sometime after six o'clock last night. I feel a little more comfortable about it. However, I really do feel uncomfortable when Hon. Members do not have the transcripts. However, I am guided by the precedent of Mr. Speaker MacNaughton. I am guided by the fact that the rules are silent as to the form of printing.

In the circumstances, I have to reject the point of order of the Hon. Member for Edmonton West following the decision of Mr. Speaker MacNaughton. For now the Chair will contin-

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ue to ensure that, in these unusual circumstances, the manuscripts are made available to those who ask for them through the Clerk of Committees or the Journals Branch.

I can assure Hon. Members that every effort will be made to ensure that transcripts are available promptly in order that we can avoid this kind of situation. However, I can give no assurance that there will not be occasional situations. I understand that the major problem was a breakdown of a piece of printing equipment over the weekend at the Queen's Printer. However, we are conscious of the need for making the transcripts available with the absolute minimum of delay.

**Mr. Lambert:** Mr. Speaker, in your consideration of this problem, would you take into account the fact that when Mr. Speaker MacNaughton made his ruling the rules did not apply as they do today? There was not a 48-hour and 24-hour requirement. That did not apply, and therefore I object to—

**Mr. Speaker:** I have the Hon. Member's—

**Mr. Lambert:** I did not address this point.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have the Hon. Member's point. The point of the Hon. Member concerns whether it is irregular for the House to proceed without the written transcript. I have dealt very narrowly with that question. I am aware that there is the additional question of the time in which amendments can be placed on the Table. Surely this is a matter in which the Chair will have to have some guidance from the Procedure and Organization Committee of the House. In the present circumstances the Chair is bound by the interpretation of the Standing Orders as I have indicated today.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I sincerely appreciate the sympathetic view that Your Honour takes with respect to this matter. On the basis of your very extensive experience as a Member of Parliament, I think you appreciate some of the frustrations that are experienced. I am sure that Members on all sides of the House will understand that our purpose is to ensure that we are fully able to carry out our responsibilities and to discuss matters in a proper and informed way.

Now that you have made your ruling, it is not my intention to comment further on it. Are we now proceeding with our presentations with respect to your preliminary statement of yesterday?

**Mr. Speaker:** At this stage the Chair will invite argument relating to the preliminary statement which I made yesterday. As indicated, the Chair has delayed as long as it seemed reasonable to do so. I hope Hon. Members are now prepared to make their arguments. The Chair will recognize the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn).

**Mr. Yurko:** Question of privilege.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Edmonton East (Mr. Yurko).