

Privilege

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief on my question of privilege. I do not wish to repeat what my colleagues have said. I do regret, though, that the meeting was called so abruptly without giving all members time to be there. I know the Liberal members made a valiant attempt to be there but something else took place.

My concern is about the public right to be heard which is a debate between the parties. My concern is about a member's right to be heard. We can have fights in committee, Mr. Speaker. I know how difficult this is for you, and I know you will rule on this.

My particular area of concern was the threat to my colleague, and implied to myself, that if we did not shut up we would be thrown out of the committee. I tried to raise a point of order on that threat, suggesting to the chair of the committee that he had no such authority to do such a thing and, second, that he had no such authority to threaten.

I am not frightened of threats and my colleague is not frightened of threats, but they have no place in that committee. To suggest that bullying from the chair is a method of conducting the business of this House is grossly mistaken and against all the traditions of Parliament.

That is why I am taking this opportunity to raise it on privilege. I refuse to be threatened by anybody and this House shall make judgments on the behaviour of members, no other member, regardless of what situation. I just wanted to point that out.

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised that my friends from the New Democratic Party would raise the issue in this Chamber the way they have this afternoon, particularly after the way they were put on the committee yesterday and spent the whole day arguing a motion, refusing to allow the motion to come to a vote.

However, I did talk to parliamentary counsel, I did get the advice of my clerk and my deputy clerk, and I was advised that a motion to move to orders of the day was appropriate. The motion was made to move to the orders of the day. I called for a vote on that motion and that motion was carried.

There was no request for a poll and I proceeded to call clause by clause. I called Clause 1 on the order of the

day. I asked for a vote on Clause 1. There was no contrary on Clause 1, and I called Clause 1 carried. And the same occurred with every clause to Clause 11. At Clause 12 one of the members, the vice-chairman, asked that Clause 12 be deferred. There was no comment from the other side about the clause.

We went then to Clause 13 and Clause 13 was carried, again in the same fashion, and Clause 14 and Clause 15 and Clause 16 and Clause 17.

Mr. Rodriguez: That's not the truth.

Mr. Blenkarn: I then suspended the hearings of the committee to see what we could do to work out something. All of the time my colleagues from the New Democratic Party were screaming, yelling, pointing, and standing up almost on their chairs. I did speak to my clerk about how to retain order. He said that I would have to report so I said we would go ahead with clause by clause. We did so.

I think I have followed the requirements of this House. I have run this committee, as you know, Mr. Speaker, as chairman, elected unanimously at every occasion for the past five years. I have enjoyed the support of the regular members of the committee, but I must say that when new members are suddenly imposed in a committee without knowledge of the committee's background sometimes things do not work in the normal fashion.

The committee did have a complete meeting lined up to analyse the way we would proceed, and we proceeded agreeably with the permanent members of the committee, but when we came to public hearings the matter was altered accordingly.

I must say the witnesses who were called for the day were all there. There was a quorum of the committee there. Unfortunately, Liberal members did not show up in time.

Mr. Speaker: I have listened very carefully to three members who have raised the question of privilege and I have listened to the chairman of the committee. I also have here a transcript of the proceedings.

I am going to do an unusual thing. I am going to reserve on this matter and I will return to the Chamber as quickly as possible. I do not think there is any need for me to hear further argument. I have the point and I also have the transcript, and I will return to the House as soon as is appropriate.