

respect to the alleged breach of privilege in a committee hearing.

First, as we all know, the committees are masters of their own destiny. I think the Hon. Member had the opportunity to place his motion on the floor. There may have been some discussion as to when it came on the committee's agenda but I do not think the Member can complain that he was prevented from putting the motion on the floor of the committee.

● (1510)

Second, it is unfortunate that the Hon. Member commented that Members had other business on a busy day, such as Tuesday. They might have had other meetings to go to. I do not think it is in order to comment on this matter without thinking about the fact that the Member had his opportunity. He placed his motion on the floor at committee. We have all lost votes in committee—

Mr. Keeper: There was no vote.

Mr. Lewis: We have all had quorums disappear on us. I think the Hon. Member will have an opportunity at another meeting to place his motion on the floor. Let the will of the committee decide. This activity goes on daily, Mr. Speaker, and I cannot see that it is a question of privilege. The Member's privileges have not been abridged. I submit, therefore, that there is no question of privilege to be considered by the Chair.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the Government and its supporters make much of the change in the rules of the House whereby so much of the work of the House is done in committees. The Government and its supporters claim that the rules as they are now give unprecedented power to Members with respect to legislation and the operations of Government. If this is to be the case, the system must work fairly for all Members, including those of the Opposition.

There may be those who argue that the propriety of raising such a matter in this Chamber is perhaps of some question. However, I submit that you, Sir, at the very least have moral authority if not formal authority on behalf of all Members of this House to ensure that all portions of our parliamentary system, as they pertain to the House of Commons and its committees, are operating fairly for all Members. Nothing more quickly undermines the credibility, in the eyes of the public suggestions, particularly on behalf of the Government, that Parliament now works better, more fully and more freely in the interests of individual Members of Parliament if there is a multiplying of cases, piling one on top of the other, which indicate that Members in support of the Government are doing things but which have the result, whether intentional or not, of preventing or making it difficult for Members of the Opposition Parties to do the jobs for which they are elected.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that you do have authority, at least moral authority, to ensure that all portions of our system,

including the committees, are operating fairly for all concerned. I respectfully urge you to take very seriously the submissions of the Hon. Member who has just spoken and to take such steps as you can, as I feel you want to take to make sure that the committee system as well as what goes on in this House of Commons operates fairly for all concerned in the interests of the effective operation and, perhaps more important, the integrity and good reputation of this House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann). I will recognize the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) in a moment.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Selkirk—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I have a short intervention on this issue brought forward by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper). Like this House, which has a standard set of orders for the day which establishes what it is going to discuss and lays it out, the committee also has business meetings to set its agenda. In fact, the agenda was set and duly transmitted to committee members about what we were going to do today, and what we were going to do the following Thursday and next week. The Hon. Member sat in on this meeting. But here we were commencing a committee hearing with a Member jumping up to change that whole direction agreed to at a meeting which he attended.

I have been at a committee meeting and seen a chairman make a ruling. I guess a Member could question, according to Beauchesne, the ruling of the Chair, and if that exercise had been carried out this morning we would have had no problem. But that did not happen.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I could put the same question that I put to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper). Could the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) give the Chair any assistance as to when the next occasion might be that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre might raise the matter that he wished to raise?

Mr. Holtmann: Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the committee, I had asked the Hon. Member whether he would like to attend a special *in camera* session to adjust our agenda, to which he replied no.

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, as deputy chairman of the committee, I would like to try to offer some assistance to the Chair. As the chairman has mentioned, the committee met *in camera* on January 20 to set a specific agenda. At that meeting we discussed the very point which the Hon. Member raised today in his motion and there was committee concurrence to deal with the matter at a later point. In agreement with my chairman, the opportunity again was put to the Member to discuss a specific time or date for this issue. The motion today was made in the presence of a number of members of the media. With all due respect to the Member, I really question whether he was dealing more with