

Routine Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, now that the important committee has been struck and the members identified, at an earlier House leaders' meeting there was an undertaking by the government House leader that there be consultations between the parties as there normally is when we are appointing such an important committee regarding the chair of the committee.

I have been reading news reports that presumably a chair has been decided. Because we had these discussions in the House leaders' meeting that indeed there would be consultations, I want to ask the Whip whether there have been consultations. I am not aware of consultations but perhaps they have been going on around me and I am not aware of them.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader convened a meeting with the member for Ottawa—Vanier who is both House leader and Whip, and the Whip of the New Democratic Party last Friday. The meeting took place around four o'clock, shortly after the Chamber had shut down last Friday, where we discussed the motion and so on.

There was no undertaking. I was present at that meeting as the Whip of the government party, and there was no undertaking at that point to discuss specifically the issue of chair. We talked about the substitution principle, the number of members, the allocation of members, the 72 hours for the striking committee to meet and those kinds of things, but there was no formal undertaking. I was not at Tuesday's House leaders' meeting of this week to know if there was an undertaking made on Tuesday of this week. Because of business in the Chamber I was not there.

I see my friends opposite indicating that there was no such undertaking made at Tuesday's House leaders' meeting as well. Certainly, as the Whip of the government party, if I could bring the House up to date, I have asked the clerk responsible for committees to consult with all three parties about a suitable time to hold an organizational meeting and I have suggested that Monday or Tuesday would be appropriate, if that was agreeable to the other two parties. I made that suggestion to the Table.

When we are dealing with a special committee we do not have the same sense of process laid out as we do with a legislative committee or a standing committee, but I thought the standing committee process of the clerk chairing the election of a chairman would be appropriate in this circumstance and that is the advice that I provided to the Table. But I asked the Table to consult with the other two parties and if there is a problem we will be glad to meet. If the leader of the New Democratic Party would like to meet with me to discuss possible chair people, I would be glad to do that as well.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Whip misunderstood my question. In an earlier House leaders' meeting, the government House leader gave us his commitment that there would be consultations regarding the chair of this important committee. Because of the nature of this committee it is not following the normal channels. I think that the process being followed has been appropriate.

However, I was given an undertaking by the government House leader that there would be consultations. There have been no consultations and that is why I say, when I was reading in the media reports that a Chair had been selected or would be appointed, I thought that perhaps there had been consultations that I was not aware of. However the Whip has said that there really had been no consultations. My concern was that a commitment had been made by the government House leader and it appears not to have been kept.

• (1350)

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I must tell the House that Tuesday was the day the Prime Minister made his speech on the McKenna proposition, the companion resolution, which is the object of discussion in this committee. There were no