

ments or even points of order on the ruling. Therefore, the hon. member, even if he is giving me notice, should know that I will not be able to hear him.

Mr. Wenman: What I would ask then is that the Speaker refer the subject matter of the Speaker's report to the committee on rules and procedures.

Mr. Pinard: Shame! Don't do that.

Madam Speaker: Again, that would require unanimous consent. The hon. member would have to make a motion, I suppose. If the hon. member will now put it in the form of a motion, I will put it to the House; or else he can give notice of a motion for another date.

Mr. Wenman: Thank you for your ruling, Madam Speaker. I shall take it under advisement and prepare a motion at another appropriate time.

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PETITIONS

TABLING OF REPORTS OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table reports of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petitions presented by hon. members on Friday, November 6, 1981, and finds that they meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. NIELSEN—RECOGNITION OF MEMBERS

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, this question concerns the matter I raised last week with respect to the microphone switching. While the matter arose out of a specific incident, before making my case to the Chair I want to emphasize that whatever I say with respect to those events, which will not be much, I do not want to be interpreted in any way as a reflection on the Chair's ruling in that particular case, because that would certainly not be my intention. Similarly, I do not want my following remarks to reflect in any way whatsoever, on the conduct of the ladies and gentlemen who operate the electronic console to my upper left.

Madam Speaker: Let me interrupt for a minute to tell the hon. member that yes, this is a question of privilege raised on the matter of the microphones, and that the hon. member knows the rules well enough to know that as long as he keeps away from the matters on which I have ruled—that is to say, who has the right to answer a question, who determines who is supposed to answer a question and how the Speaker has to be neutral as to the possible double interpretation of a question—

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

he can speak about the question of the microphones quite freely, and I certainly welcome his comments.

Mr. Nielsen: That, indeed, is my intention, although in my submission there will be one brief reference to that particular incident. However, when I have been heard out, it will be readily discernible that my main submission will concern the equality of hon. members in this House, the dangers of what I perceive to be the overtaking of technological progress which has been introduced to our House machinery, the prerogatives of the Chair, and, hence, the rights of hon. members.

One of the most basic powers or discretions of the Chair, which was referred to at the time of the last incident, is the right to decide to recognize during debate, including the question period, those hon. members who wish to participate therein. This applies, may it please the Chair, to both the questioner and the respondent. The use of this discretion ensures order and gives all hon. members the confidence that they are being treated equally. This is the main theme of my presentation today.

In my submission, this discretion which resides solely with the Chair should operate without any reference at all to the sound amplification system in this place, and the sound system should have no effect as to who is recognized and who is not. I have ensured that inquiries have been made of the individual switching systems in order to be sure of my facts.

The switchers should follow the direction of the Speaker at all times. The Speaker alone is sensitive to all the procedural considerations involved in recognition. In my submission, the switchers should have no influence or discretion at all—and there can be no room for either—with respect to influencing the proceedings on the floor.

In my submission, the same principles of operation have applied or, at least, should have applied, regardless of the sound system. From 1954 to 1964 there was in this chamber a system of microphones which hung from the ceiling and which a switcher controlled by zones, which included whole areas where hon. members on both sides of the House were sitting. From 1964 until 1977 there were two different systems, both featuring only one microphone per desk. Since 1977 we have had the present system with two microphones on a desk or one microphone on each desk of the pair.

In theory, as far as most members were concerned, these mikes simply went on when the Speaker recognized an hon. member who rose, regardless of the hon. member's position or function in the House or government. If the Speaker did not actively, *viva voce*, recognize an hon. member, that hon. member had no sound.

In my submission, it is now clear that there has been an important change in the interaction between the Speaker and the microphones, one which was never discussed in the House and which might have been very closely examined if it had been heretofore suggested. Perhaps with the introduction of television, or with the transfer of the switching function which occurred on January 2, 1981, just this year, from electronic services to the broadcasting service, which they probably do