

Privileges and Elections

Let me say again that I am very happy about the evidence collected by the committee on privileges and elections. However, the behaviour of the members involved and the improper reports published by some unscrupulous journalists are a bad omen for the future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[English]

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my first observation is one of regret that the government house leader was unable to agree yesterday to ask for leave of the house to move concurrence in the third report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections when we could have had a full debate on it at that time. Nevertheless, half a loaf is better than none and we are grateful that those of us who dissent from the third report have at least this opportunity, albeit a small one, to make some references to it.

I am also grateful that this hour has provided the hon. member for Manicougan (Mr. Blouin) with an opportunity to make a statement. I say to him sincerely that I am genuinely happy to see he has recovered, genuinely glad to see he is back in the house and able to defend himself because it was for me one of the regrettable aspects of this whole affair that it had to be conducted in the hon. member's absence, an absence caused by illness. As I say, I am glad the hon. member has now recovered and today is back here able to speak for himself.

• (1:10 p.m.)

I repeat what I said during the course of the hon. member's remarks, when I felt obliged to interrupt him, that I at no time laid a charge against him personally. Anybody who reads my question of privilege which was raised on December 10 and which can be found at page 3735 of *Hansard* will see that I made no personal charge against the hon. member. Perhaps it might be worth while to quote what I said:

My question of privilege is based on the fact that the resolution adopted by the committee on November 28 was, in my view, deliberately omitted from its report to the house on November 29—

If the hon. member feels that constitutes a charge against him personally, I regret that very much. That was my feeling then, and I felt very strongly about it.

Even today there remains on the order paper a motion for concurrence in the second

[Mr. Blouin.]

report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. It still appears under the name of the hon. member for Manicougan, and no motion for concurrence has been made. I found it strange, as I find it strange now, that during the interim after the report was submitted to the house concurrence was not moved. I do not blame the hon. member for Manicougan. I think he has been very poorly used in this instance.

An hon. Member: By you.

Mr. McGrath: I think he has been very poorly used in this instance by the house leader and his colleagues. I heard no voice raised in his defence in the house when he was in hospital.

An hon. Member: You were not here.

Mr. McGrath: I heard no one get up and raise a defence for the hon. member, and I think the hon. member was badly used.

An hon. Member: Why don't you read *Hansard*?

Mr. McGrath: I believe now as I believed at the time that my resolution which was passed by the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications on November 28 constituted a part of the committee's second report and was in fact omitted when the report was tabled before the house.

It might be worth while to review the reason I felt obliged to move the motion in the first instance. The committee at the time was conducting, under a reference by the house, an examination into the main estimates of the Canadian Transport Commission. Several members of the committee, including myself, were examining a decision made by that commission, the effects of which was to disestablish or do away entirely with rail passenger service in an entire province, not just on a branch line. Up to that time the Canadian Transport Commission was considering the abandonment of branch lines, and the entire rail transportation system of a province cannot under any circumstances be considered a branch line. I did not move my resolution for any frivolous or mischievous reason.

An hon. Member: Oh, please!

Mr. McGrath: The hon. member who interrupts presents himself to the house as an expert on fisheries and on almost everything else. If he will control himself and listen to my contribution for a few minutes, perhaps