

*Privilege*

Prime Minister would be particularly concerned about this. Why do I hold this view, and why do I take a few moments of the time of the house to urge Your Honour to see a prima facie case of privilege? I do so in the context of the fact that we are about to consider changes in the rules, one of the most important parts of which consists of giving more work and more authority to the standing committees of this house.

I was saying we were about to change the rules so as to give more authority and more work to committees of this house. If the allegations are correct—and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you cannot know at this point—you have to accept them as stated, and there has been no contradiction of them.

If it is still correct that a report of a standing committee can be written by a chairman alone, or by a chairman and some of his buddies; if it does not need to go to the steering committee, then those who say our standing committee procedure will be a farce are thoroughly correct.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Lewis:** One then gets the suspicion that one of the objectives of putting estimates in the hands of the committees is, in the minds of some persons, precisely to achieve that kind of purpose.

**Mr. McIlraith:** Order.

**Mr. Lewis:** The Solicitor General may call "order" if he likes, but I suggest to Your Honour that in the context of the duties we want to place on these committees it becomes terribly important that the kind of misbehaviour alleged against the chairman of the committee should not be permitted to go unchallenged, without action being taken by this house.

This is why I suggest that Your Honour is deciding in this case not merely an isolated instance but something which is important as a precedent for the future work of this parliament. As to the incident itself, I agree that what you have before you is a simple allegation of misconduct by an officer of a standing committee of this house, an allegation that a report tabled in this house was an incorrect report, an incomplete report which did not represent the decision of the committee. I can hardly see anything which is more clearly an abuse of the privileges of the house than that.

**Mr. Lundrigan:** On the same question of privilege, may I just say "ditto".

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

[Mr. Lewis.]

**Hon. D. S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council):** I rise only to deal with some of the points made by the hon. member for York South. First, he implied there was something sinister about the fact that at this point the government has not indicated whether the motion would be accepted by it. Perhaps I can remind the hon. member that at this stage we are faced with the question of deciding whether there is a prima facie question of privileges, not whether the motion is acceptable. When that has been determined we will be prepared to make a decision in favour of a reference.

It seems to me that allegations of the sort the hon. member for York South has made against the chairman of the committee, who is regrettably absent today, are the kind of thing which should be considered by the standing committee on privileges and elections, and for my part I would be quite prepared to support this motion. But I would point out to the hon. member that there is a tradition in this house that where serious allegations such as the hon. member has made against the chairman of the committee are discovered to be unfounded, it has been the tradition in the past that the hon. member's seat goes with them.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** I suggest both to the hon. member and to others in this house—and I say this on behalf of the absent member who is not here to defend himself—

**Mr. Bell:** Talk about tradition, when last night we passed billions of dollars in estimates in five minutes.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** I suggest it is not proper to suggest there has been some kind of false or fraudulent conduct on the part of the hon. member who is absent, and I for one would be delighted to see the allegations made by the hon. member for York South and others disproved by the committee.

**Mr. Lewis:** May I ask the President of the Privy Council a simple question. If there is unanimous agreement that this be considered a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker might be able to deal with it without the necessity of this debate.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** May I say to the hon. member that Mr. Speaker has the right and the responsibility to decide questions like this, and the hon. member for York South should not seek to arrogate this right to himself.