

In light of the changes which have been made to the rules concerning committees, it is important that that attitude is protected. All Members must be seen as active members of the committee and must attend meetings so that the committee can perform its work. In conclusion, I do not believe that this is a point of order or that members of the Opposition have a grievance.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from the great province of Alberta. However, I was not raising a question of privilege. I was raising the issue of whether I have the right, as a Member of the House, to raise a question of privilege in view of what Mr. Speaker has said and in view of what has taken place in a legislative committee which is new to the House of Commons.

At the same time, my colleague raised a question of privilege on a previous occasion in this House. I am looking for direction from the Chair. Surely to God, on the substance of the issue, if all that is required for procedural matters at a legislative committee is a slim majority, and a legislative committee requires that one member of the Opposition be present when testimony and evidence is heard, you cannot logically say that the two are not linked and related. There is a consequential effect with regard to the procedure which relies upon and is directly related to the evidence which may be adduced from different witnesses. To me that is the genesis, if you will, of a question of privilege, if you say that I have, at least, the right to raise the question of privilege.

I would not want the Hon. Member opposite to have illusions that members of the Opposition were not present. We were present. We left about 10 minutes before the meeting adjourned, having given notice to the Chair and other members. One must keep in mind that that particular session was advertised solely and strictly as a meeting to adduce evidence from the various witnesses. As you know, as counsel, Mr. Speaker, at no time during the deliberations was any notice given that this matter would be raised, either to myself, the representative of the loyal Opposition, to the representative of the New Democratic Party, or to the chairperson of the committee. As I said earlier today in my remarks before the committee, the Hon. Member for Burlington (Mr. Kempling) said in the press that he did not know of this particular matter.

There are two issues here. The first is whether I have a right to stand and present a question of privilege. Second, if we are to say that procedural matters are not linked to the substantive listening to evidence of various witnesses, it becomes very incredible.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank Hon. Members for their interventions. The Chair has heard sufficient on this issue to try to find a way through these difficulties.

The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond is, in effect, on a point of order, as the Chair suggested that that was the proper procedure. He is seeking counsel from the Chair. His complaint relates to the same committee from which the complaint of the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr.

Point of Order—Mr. Riis

Orlikow) emanated several days ago, as was pointed out by the Hon. Member. After listening carefully to Hon. Members at that time the Chair decided to adjourn the matter for some time to see whether the committee could resolve the difficulties alleged by certain Members. The Chair must take these interventions as a suggestion that there are still some difficulties in the committee. The Chair will consider what was said a few days ago as well as what was said today and will try to give some guidance to the Chamber.

I would like to suggest—and this is only a suggestion because the Chair is not to interfere with committees—that, if there is a complaint, it should first be taken to the committee through the co-operation of the chairman. I believe that would apply to either a legislative committee or a standing committee. However, as the Chair indicated to the Hon. Member a few days ago, and some weeks ago, and as was pointed out by the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), some of these procedures are new. The legislative committee concept is new. The Chair is concerned that we be very careful not to allow a situation to go from what might be called a strictly procedural point, which clearly would be a matter for the committee to settle itself, to a circumstance which might indeed be a breach of privilege. The Chair must consider that very carefully, because if something is taking place which strikes at the heart of a Member's right to speak, albeit not necessarily a Member's right to always get what he or she wants, that is a very serious area.

Therefore, I will consider the representations made a few days ago initiated by the Member for Winnipeg North, as well as those today initiated by the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, who properly phrased his intervention as a point of order. Nonetheless, it touches the matters with which the Chair, and all Hon. Members, have to deal. Certainly, in listening to perhaps some of the comments concerning the very respected and senior Member of this House who has taken on the responsibility in this legislative committee as chairman, the Hon. Member for Crowfoot, the Chair did not take any of the comments made to be impugning in any way the good intentions or honour of that Hon. Member.

• (1530)

The Chair will take notice of the matter and will see what can be done to be of assistance to all Hon. Members.

ALLEGED INCORRECT STATEMENT OF MR. KING

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, with reluctance I rise on a point of order to clarify a very serious issue which was raised earlier today when the Hon. Member for Okanagan—Similkameen (Mr. King), through an interjection, indicated that the energy critic for the provincial New Democratic Party did not oppose the sale of the West Kootenay Power and Light Company to an American firm. I want to say that that is blatantly incorrect. It is a falsehood. I