

Privilege

mentary and a breach of our privileges as Members of Parliament.

Fourth, the conduct of certain members of the legislative committee be referred to the appropriate committee of this House for the proper disciplinary action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce for the Liberal Party, the loyal opposition and then I will recognize the chairman of the committee and the mover of the motion. I think that will be sufficient.

• (1510)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, as a member of this legislative committee, I want to fully support the question of privilege just raised by my colleague from Timmins.

In all my years in Parliament I have never seen such action as was taken by that legislative committee last evening, which I believe to be totally unprecedented. The majority of the members on the committee who represent the government side were so upset by the testimony of the witness—the witness we invited to the committee, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers—that not only did they vote to expel the witness from the committee, but to totally expunge all the testimony the witness from the union had given up until that time.

One might understand, as in this House, if the witness before the committee had made one statement or phrase that was unacceptable or unparliamentary, which he was asked to retract. But that was not the case. The committee voted to expunge not simply that statement which seemed to offend them, but the entire testimony of the committee as it took place last evening.

I want to fully support this question of privilege raised by my hon. colleague. If we accept that kind of procedure in a committee or in this House, as a matter of fact, where if we simply do not like the tone of debate or what is said we can expunge the entire proceedings, then we end up in a situation which is totally unparliamentary, totally contrary to our democratic procedures.

I think at the very least, Mr. Speaker, you should accept this question of privilege and rule that the testimony must be accepted. If there is one particular

phrase in the testimony that is unparliamentary then perhaps that might be deleted from the testimony.

One certainly must accept that the great bulk of the testimony, which included questions and remarks by members of the committee and the chairman as well, should remain for the historical basis of the committee. Many very good, telling points were made by the union, which was a witness before the committee.

There were other requests made by the hon. member in his question of privilege which I think have to be looked at as well. I have never witnessed, in my experience as a committee member, the expulsion of witnesses from a committee because we did not like the tone or substance of what they were saying. I think that is uncalled for as well.

This is a very serious matter and if we allow this sort of precedent to stand in our committees, I think we are going on a long road toward destroying our committee and parliamentary system.

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I rose in this place on February 26 to explain why I abstained from voting on the two motions on this bill. I implied that it was an honour your office was giving me to chair this committee. A number of people laughed and said I was going to find it was not much of an honour. It has indeed proven to be an interesting experience.

To help in your deliberations, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to give you my recitation of the events of yesterday afternoon as I recall them without my notes in front of me.

To begin with, during the testimony there were a number of references which, in my judgment, I perhaps could have called the individual making the presentation to task on. I chose not to. Had they occurred in this House, the Speaker would have ruled them out of order and called them to point at that time. However, because the witnesses were not members of this House, I allowed a fair degree of latitude in their comments.

They concluded their remarks with one extremely inflammatory and accusatory statement about government members to which a member of the government side of the committee took exception and, on a point of order, asked to have it withdrawn. At that point I asked the witnesses if they would be good enough to withdraw