

Conduct of Chairman of Defence Committee

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the committee chairmen must operate by the rules of this house and must act in accordance with the example that is set by the Speaker himself and by the chairman of the committee of the whole house, not in this arbitrary fashion which makes the rest of us just slaves at the beck and call of a temporary chairman of a committee who has no particular standing in the House of Commons.

Mr. H. E. Gray (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, may I just say a few words on the point raised by the hon. member. I do not base my remarks upon the fact that I am a member of the defence committee, because I am not a member of that committee.

I draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, and to the attention of the house, and it is my understanding of procedures in the house and procedures in committees, that questions of order in committee must be settled in committee and cannot be appealed to Mr. Speaker. I have not had a chance to look at the precedents set forth in Beauchesne, but the question of such a decision being appealed to the Speaker arose on at least one occasion during the time the hon. gentleman and his colleagues occupied the government side of the house.

I suggest this is not a matter to be dealt with at this time in the House of Commons. It should be settled within the committee according to the usual and accustomed practices.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): I am not a member of the defence committee—

An hon. Member: Keep quiet, then.

Mr. Howard: I shall refrain from commenting on that blurb from somebody I shall politely call an hon. member. As I say, Mr. Speaker, I am not a member of that committee but I know something about the conduct of the hon. gentleman chairing that committee at the moment. We must look at the whole matter in that light when considering whether there is a question of privilege.

The hon. gentleman chairing the committee in question is also chairman of the fisheries committee, of which I am a member. The fisheries committee met on a number of occasions during this session, considering the estimates of the Department of Fisheries. While it is true that the chairman of that fisheries committee, acting as chairman probably are wont to act, attempted on a number of occasions to speed the committee's consideration

[Mr. Churchill.]

of the fisheries estimates, he did not have his full sway with the committee in its activities.

I am not detracting from the hon. gentleman; I am merely saying he acted as chairman of committees should act, to get the committee business proceeded with as quickly as possible. It seems to me that the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, who has raised this matter of privilege, when this particular declaration was made by the chairman in the defence committee ought to have moved an appropriate motion to do something—

Mr. Churchill: It was eleven o'clock. The bells were ringing.

Mr. Howard: The bells were ringing, but I wish the hon. gentleman would let me finish. I did not interrupt him, and neither did anybody else. Everybody listened with great interest to what he had to say. As I was saying, had he been on his toes there was nothing to stop him from trying to obtain the floor to move that the committee meet at a particular time.

Mr. Churchill: On a point of order, I had no opportunity to get the floor.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena.

Mr. Howard: The hon. gentleman from Winnipeg Centre—

An hon. Member: Winnipeg South Centre.

Mr. Howard: Every time I listen to the hon. gentleman from Winnipeg South Centre raise one of his spurious points in this house I must restrain myself so much that I forget the geographical location of his constituency. We had dealings with him in the past when he was government house leader, when he fumbled everything that came within his grasp.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member kindly limit his remarks to the question now before the house.

Mr. Howard: I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you recognized from the outset that the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre had no question of privilege, and I am sure it will only be a matter of time until Your Honour so advises him.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Essex West would search in vain through the precedents and rulings in Beauchesne to settle the