

hope to be able to give the House some direction on this matter on Monday. If hon. members who have not been heard today still seek the opportunity to intervene at that time, I would be glad to hear them.

In the meantime, as invited to do, I trust that the government will give very serious consideration to the interventions made today. I intend to do the same and hope that we can come to some assessment of the matter that will satisfy the House on Monday.

I also have a notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming).

MR. FLEMING—PROPOSED CANCELLATION OF CBC TELEVISION PROGRAM "THE NATION'S BUSINESS"

**Mr. Jim Fleming (York West):** Mr. Speaker, I bring this matter to your attention today as a result of developments yesterday. It concerns a matter that has been brought up both in committee and here in the House of Commons in recent weeks regarding the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and its decision to cancel "The Nation's Business", "La politique fédérale".

I believe it is an important matter to be discussed, and I rise today not only because a question of privilege is a legitimate means to bring forward a grievance here in the House of Commons when members' privileges or Parliament's privileges are being contravened, but I think there is some ground even for saying it goes the full distance of being a legitimate and full question of privilege which may call for some investigation by a parliamentary committee.

The situation at the moment as I understand it is that a meeting to be held with senior representatives of the major parties and representatives of the CBC yesterday was cancelled because the President of the CBC, Mr. Johnson, wanted to take the issue back to his board of directors. His board of directors at an earlier stage did endorse his position that "La politique fédérale" and "The Nation's Business" would be cancelled for the six-week period of the Quebec referendum. What is unclear is whether he is going back to get a reconfirmation because of the objections raised strongly in committee by this side of the House, the opposition. Certainly at least one member on his own behalf from the New Democratic Party and a number of members on the culture and communications committee from the government side had some real concerns as well.

● (1420)

I believe that our rights are being abrogated by the attitude taken by the president of the CBC and the decision of his board. I want to give some reasons for that. First, I think this program is established as a—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I wonder if the hon. member really seriously contends that action taken to cancel a public affairs program in which some political parties of the country have an opportunity to air their views, while it may be a matter of grievance which he can take up with the minister

*Privilege—Mr. Fleming*

who reports to Parliament on behalf of the national broadcasting corporation, and while it may be a matter of great concern that can be taken up in that way, really is a question of privilege. I would have to hear him on that.

**Mr. Fleming:** Mr. Speaker, I would argue it can be for several reasons. One is that that program, by its very name and title, by what it has come to be known by the Canadian public, is an extension of this House.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** I really have to confine the hon. member. There have been several public affairs programs on both private and public networks. They are all excellent vehicles through which hon. members have the opportunity to express their views. They are interviewed. I understand the time is usually shared equally in proportion to the representation of the parties, perhaps in this House or a provincial chamber, and things of that sort. However, just because these programs give members of political parties the opportunity to put forward their views, does it mean that that has become an extension of the rights that members enjoy by virtue of being elected members of the House of Commons and without which they can be said to be interfered with? The House must remember that in these questions of privilege, what we are dealing with always in the area of privilege is an interference with a fundamental right that a member has which enables him or her to carry out their basic responsibilities as an elected member of the House of Commons.

There are a number of additional consequences, results or benefits that come with the position of being an elected member of the House of Commons, but essentially a question of privilege deals with an interference with the basic opportunity of a member to function and carry out his or her responsibilities as an elected member of the House of Commons, such as physical interference with a member in getting to the House, deception of the member and things of that nature.

Surely access to the airwaves in any kind of form is not fundamental as a right consequent upon being elected but rather something in addition to that. I do not know how I could ever consider a decision of that sort to take away the program entirely. If it were perhaps proposed to take it away from one set of members and not another, and I do not extend to that, it might be a different situation; but to take the program off the air is not something to which we can attach our rights simply by being members of the House of Commons.

**Mr. Fleming:** If I can expand my point, Mr. Speaker; I did not have much chance to make several points which may have some pertinence. Certainly as I know the practices of this House, members have been able to rise when they feel they have a grievance. In most cases, Mr. Speaker, you found that that did not carry through to being a legitimate question of privilege and referred to a committee. Aside from the arguments—I will keep what you have said in mind, and I will skip