

*Routine Proceedings*

vention that will be used by chairs of committees from now on.

Because I do not think the attempted birth of a closure procedure in committee can at this time be reviewed as an isolated incident, I want to say that as a minority party in this Parliament we can only see it in concert with what has been to us an alarming increase in the use of closure and time allocation and a severe diminution of the ability of minority voices to be heard.

Six years have passed between the Lachance ruling and the ruling of the hon. member for Mississauga South, just as six years used to pass between one closure in this House and the next. In today's parliamentary environment we can expect that this tactic, if it is allowed to become a precedent, will be used again, again and again.

The question I would like to address is whether or not you as Speaker and the House have an obligation to review what transpired in the finance committee during the review of Bill C-62, the act to implement the goods and services tax.

You, Mr. Speaker, and previous Speakers have repeatedly decided that "matters and procedural issues that arise in committees ought to be settled in committee unless the committee reports them first to the House". It has been quoted time and time again by yourself and other Speakers.

There are countless precedents where complaints and grievances arising from committees have been brought to the attention of the Chair, and the decision of the Chair has remained always to remain disengaged from whatever the dispute may be.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I think there are important distinctions between this particular incidence and many of the precedents and compelling reasons for the Chair and the House to reflect and decide upon this particular case.

• (1220)

You have rarely been asked, Mr. Speaker, to rule on the actions of committee chairmen which were as serious or as irregular as those which we saw in the finance committee last week.

The unfortunate ruling by the chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs in 1984 was one occasion.

Another was a case in 1919 when the House considered the second report of the "Special Committee appointed for the purpose of an inquiry forthwith as to the prices charged throughout Canada for foodstuffs, clothing, fuel and other necessities of life".

When concurrence was moved in that report in 1919 an hon. member raised his concerns about voting irregularities in the committee. Specifically, he was concerned that while he had the utmost confidence in the chair and did not mean to do anything which would denigrate the reputation of the chairperson, he pointed out that the chairman actually voted twice. He voted during the proceedings and again once to break a tie.

The member argued that "the report which purports to be the report of the committee on the cost of living is not the report of the committee, and that it should be sent back for further consideration". I am quoting from his comments in *Hansard*.

In other words, the member argued that the process was flawed, and that the committee should be told to go back and do it again.

On that occasion the Speaker in the chair did not buy that argument and permitted the House to concur in the committee report. Because that 1919 incident has like the 1974 incident become cited as precedent, I would like to point to an important distinction between the situations that faced the Speaker of that day and what faces us today.

On that occasion back on July 1, 1919, the Speaker ruled, and I quote:

The House is only seized of the proceedings of the committee from the report that it gets from the committee. There is no reference in the report whatever to any question having been raised in committee and therefore my ruling is that it is not competent for this House to go back of the report which is in its possession now.

The difference is that today this House is seized of the proceedings of the finance committee. They have just been tabled. There is reference in those proceedings to the question having been raised in the committee.