

*Privilege—Mr. Knowles*

government decision, then I do not criticize members, as individuals, for voting as they did in committee. In this House of Commons we act as parties so I do not criticize members of that committee who voted as they did. I criticize the caucus, or the government, for deciding that members ought to vote that way. That is the way we work in the House of Commons. On crucial matters the Conservative caucus decides how their members on a committee should vote, as does the Conservative party.

The government puts forth a hypocritical argument, suggesting that somehow its members are autonomous, that they voted one way this morning and that now they may reconsider.

If the government had any integrity at all on this point, Madam Speaker, surely it would admit it is wrong and ought to have made the decision to televise the committee proceedings in the first place. It would say that the Government of Canada intends to introduce a resolution to this House to permit the committee proceedings to be televised. That would be the honourable course of action.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Broadbent:** Instead of admitting it is wrong, and among other matters, that is the Liberal party's great historical failure, never admitting that it is wrong, instead of saying it made a mistake and has now changed its mind, it is going to force ordinary members of Parliament to reverse themselves as individuals. What an uncharitable, dastardly, despicable course of action that is.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, I just want the government House leader to know that I listened to him very quietly. I gave him the opportunity to take the only position which is acceptable in these circumstances. There is no other acceptable decision in this House today except for the government House leader to stand on his feet in this place and move a motion in amendment of the resolution that stands in the name of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien). There is nothing else acceptable in this Parliament. I give the government House leader another chance.

● (1700)

I did not speak idly at the outset of the debate. I have been in the hon. member's position, and I did not speak idly with respect to it. Quite frankly, I expected a more acceptable response. I expected the government House leader, not just as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, but as leader of the House of Commons, to take his responsibilities with respect to that very seriously. I want to tell him now that I am sadly disappointed and I say that to him directly. Our relationship in this House of Commons has been a good one, notwithstanding differences of opinion that have arisen. I do not like to see a good man being made a tool of a bad government.

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

**An hon. Member:** Look who is talking.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** But that is what has happened to my hon. friend. Nothing occurred during the course of these events that gave me any idea that that kind of response would come from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, indeed from the leader of the House of Commons. In the best interests of this place I say to him that nothing else is acceptable. Nothing else is acceptable to us with respect to the operation of this place than for my hon. friend later today to seek the permission of the House of Commons to revert to motions, and introduce an amendment to the motion in the way discussed by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), so as to take the responsibility which is implicit in the ruling given by Madam Speaker. This is a responsibility which lies on the shoulders of the government, led in this House by my friend, the government House leader. Nothing else is acceptable. He should understand that, and so should his colleagues.

There have been some discussions in this House about the importance of the motion of closure to the operations of the House. That matter is important, but this is important too. We have been fed nothing but double talk. The issue is a clear one. As a government does it want this done or not? It is its responsibility. The government cannot hang the backbenchers and private members out to dry to evade their responsibility but that is what the government is doing.

**Mr. Chénier:** Just worry about your guys.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** My friends over there say "Do not worry about us". I am not worried too much about them. But I am worried about what the people of Canada are going to see, what they are going to think of this Parliament, and what they are going to think of the process which is as important as the resolution. I am worried about the operation of this place in the face of a government which has become so arrogant that it would fly in the face of a request to televise a committee. Is that what the minister of communications wants? Is that the kind of openness which the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox) responsible for freedom of information wants? Is that what the government wants? My friends say this is pompous indignation. I tell you it is righteous indignation, and hon. members opposite are going to feel the effects of this for a long, long time.

**Mr. Knowles:** Madam Speaker, may I attempt to sum up in just a sentence or two what has been said over here. If it is true that the government has had second thoughts and has decided to permit radio and television broadcasting of the proceedings of the committee, I tell the government to do it directly. Do not do it in the contrived way of asking the 13 Liberals to cast a different vote tonight than they cast this morning. I say to the government House leader to do it directly, and bring in the motion.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Be a man.