

undermine the integrity and independence of any committee and its members.

I will end by stressing the importance all Members place on the McGrath recommendations. That report suggests that committees are to be somewhat more useful in influencing public policy. The system should allow for greater independence of a committee from the Government. Yet now we have a motion which suggests that MPs are unable to access research information unless consent is obtained from the chairman of the committee.

**Mr. Lewis:** How do you know you will not get it?

**Mr. Marchi:** Then government Members have the temerity to suggest that any Member who does not subscribe to the motion will face some consequences. In my humble opinion that motion is undemocratic. It poisons the possibility of the non-partisan co-operation this committee has had for the last two and a half years. It threatens its independence and is an affront to the individual freedoms of individual Members as well as undermines the purpose of research being available to Members. I hope you address yourself to this very crucial motion, because it is in danger of setting a very alarming course for members of our parliamentary committees.

**Mr. Andrew Witer (Parkdale—High Park):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to both the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) and the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi). In the interest of your making a decision, it would help if we got all the facts on the table.

This morning the committee voted on a motion to evaluate the researchers and research requirements of the committee. The Chair was to report back to the committee before the end of this year. That motion, if not unanimously passed, was at least passed by the majority of Members present.

While there was debate on the motion, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt agreed that it would be in the best interests of the committee and the evaluation if Members of Parliament were not to use the services of the researchers during the course of the evaluation. I therefore find it somewhat odd that the Hon. Member now believes his privileges have been somehow abused. He agreed to the very motion prior to the vote. I find it very unusual that five minutes prior to the motion being put the Member did not feel that his privileges were being violated, supported the motion, and then all of a sudden finds himself in a position where those privileges are being violated.

I invite you to examine the record, and I suggest there has been no violation of any Member's privileges whatsoever.

**Mr. Speaker:** I should indicate that the complaint may, given the facts coming out, be a serious one. I have some doubt as to whether it is a question of privilege. I want to indicate to Hon. Members that the Chair has the point being made, but some assistance could be given, perhaps by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) who spoke first, if he could send to the Chair, for my deliberation at the appropriate time,

*Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez*

the actual motion passed in the committee. I ask him to do that.

• (1520)

The Chair has the point and will hear several more Members, but we will not spend all afternoon on the issue.

The Hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grace—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand).

**Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East):** Mr. Speaker, as a former chairman and a present member of the committee, I want to speak in support of the question of privilege. When I and the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) were chairmen of the committee, members of the committee were never required to ask the chairman for access to the researchers which were made available to the committee.

You, Mr. Speaker, were once a member of the Opposition and know that Members in Opposition do not have the same expertise available to them to assist them with their work in Parliament as do the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries who are provided with a lot of research support by their Departments.

It was a great day when, on the recommendation of the McGrath committee, committees were able to contract experts to help them with research. For the last two years members of that committee have been able to call these researchers to get information on matters being dealt with by the committee. I am not speaking of matters which were not being dealt with by the committee.

To pass a resolution that members of the committee cannot have access to the expertise of those researchers who are being paid by Parliament and the people of Canada is a violation of our privileges, because it affects the way we can work in Parliament. We have one or two research people in our offices but cannot afford experts in the areas on which we are critics. Therefore, we rely on the experts who are assigned to committees. These are experts in labour economics, employment economics and immigration who can provide us with expertise.

The issue of unemployment insurance was before the committee last spring. I could call the researcher and ask him to look into former studies done in the 1940s or 1950s on a certain point and report on that to the committee, as well as on the implications of the Forget report on such matters. To require me to ask the chairman whether I can do that is a clear violation of my privileges.

As long as we are dealing with the work before the committee in a broad way, we must have the right to ask researchers to study specific points so that all aspects can be brought out and we can do our work better. If we cannot do that we become eunuchs and the reforms are meaningless.