

Privilege

the authoritarian actions of the chair of the finance committee.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you have often said in the past that what goes on in committee is the committee's business, but if a member of Parliament cannot appeal to the highest Chair in Parliament, where does he seek justice if he cannot get it from the chair of the committee of which he is legally a member?

I humbly submit then that there is evidence of a *prima facie* breach of my privileges and that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Gloucester also has a question of privilege. It seems to be very much on the same point. It might be better that I hear his point before hearing any response.

• (1520)

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. My point of privilege, as I indicated under Standing Order 42, is based on the fact that this morning we were convened to a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance to deal with matters referred to us by this House.

I want to explain that under normal circumstances when a meeting is convened, as it was, for the hour of 9.30 a.m. we should be there. The events of this morning that have been described in some part by my colleague from Nickel Belt took place without my being present, and I want to explain why I believe there is a question of privilege involved.

This morning the West Block of the Hill was very much a buzz of activity as a result of His Excellency, the Secretary of External Affairs of the Soviet Union being present in that building to address another committee. I left a meeting being held at the Centre Block and walked over to the building. It was difficult, and understandably so, to get access to the committee room. I arrived at 27 minutes before ten o'clock. I see my hon. friends who cooked up the scheme that they were part of this morning shaking their heads. Most of the time they are not there at all, much less on time.

We walked in and already the event described by my hon. colleague who raised the question of privilege had taken place. I do not want to comment on the events that

took place this morning as it applies to the question of privilege raised by hon. friend, but certainly it seems to me that, in keeping with the traditions and customs of this place, it was not necessary, although the activities that took place yesterday may have caused some embarrassment to members of government, to try to push through the reading of a certain number of clauses in the legislation that had been referred to us.

I am suggesting that even if the government is exasperated with the activities of certain members, it still seems to me that given the situation of what was going on in the West Block this morning and the difficulty that we had to arrive there, it was not courteous to members of this House that we had to play the political games that were being played there this morning.

I humbly suggest that my privileges as a member were breached by the lack of understanding exhibited by the committee at the time, by convening it at 9.30 a.m. and by concluding its activity minutes later.

When I did arrive, the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance indicated that there had been some deliberations take place of a very, very short nature and that the meeting was adjourned to the call of the chair.

Given the fact that members are in different parts of the complex here, whether at the Wellington Building, Confederation Building, Centre Block, or West Block, it seems to me that we do need to respect the rights of members of this place. Functioning on a committee such as the Standing Committee on Finance requires a great deal of time and a great deal of effort. It does not serve the purpose of this House, when it refers matters of such importance as the goods and services tax to the committee, that these kinds of things take place.

I respectfully submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that in operating as they did this morning in that committee my privileges and the privileges of my colleagues, the Liberal members of the finance committee, were breached. I bring to the attention of the Chair and to the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance that if we are going to deal in a meaningful and constructive way with important measures that are brought before us, we might want to start to behave the way I think most Canadians expect parliamentarians to behave in such circumstances.