

*Privilege*

The witness in question was Mr. Donald Lander, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canada Post Corporation. This motion was moved yesterday revoking the previous motion and asking that Mr. Lander no longer be asked to testify next Monday but be asked to come at another date sometime hence.

That item was not on the order paper, not for consideration by the committee and, as a matter of fact, it could have very well been that members generally interested in that issue would have not even known that that item was up for discussion.

If we were, by extension—

**Mr. Speaker:** Just a moment. I am not going to cut off the hon. member's argument, but I want to ask something.

Is the hon. member making this proposition: that if a notice goes out to members of a committee setting out what is to be discussed or setting out a notice or an agenda, and if something else happens that day, that that is somehow a breach of privilege of members? Is that the proposition?

**Mr. Boudria:** Not necessarily, Mr. Speaker, but I submit that you could be right. My suggestion is the following, Mr. Speaker, and let me explain to you why I think that upon instances what you say would be—

**Mr. Speaker:** All I can say is that it is terribly hard to rule against when you make such flattering suggestions, but the Chair is serious. If that is the proposition I must understand it as such.

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, for instance, the document that I have here states: "orders of the day". If that is the only order of the day listed then that item is as you correctly suggested the one that should be discussed. Of course, without having consulted the steering committee to change the order of the day, then that item should be the only one. Or, alternatively, if unanimous consent of the committee would have been sought and granted, then of course that agenda could have been changed.

As you see, Mr. Speaker, the point I am making to you is that as you indicated earlier it could very well be that this in fact is a question of privilege. It becomes a

question of privilege simply because government members on the committee did not seek to do that, moved this motion unilaterally and had it passed.

In conclusion, what has happened is that an item that was never before the committee, a topic that was never before the committee or scheduled before the committee on what was circulated stating "orders of the day". . . and that is what it says on Issue No. 23 of the Standing Committee of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations—was before us.

If we are asked to discuss a different item or items without unanimous consent of the committee to change that order, in fact by extension if we were to apply that to the House, the government could stand here on any day and declare that day to be the budget day, unilaterally, without even asking the previous consent of the House.

We just cannot operate that way. We do not do it in this House. I would submit to you that although the committees are the masters of their own business they nevertheless have to respect the orders of the House and you, Sir, are the custodian of those rules of the House which we collectively ask you administer on our behalf.

That is the point, Mr. Speaker, that I wanted to raise with you. I want to say, in conclusion, that I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion if you so deem that I have at least a *prima facie* case of privilege to be brought before the appropriate committee.

**Mr. Speaker:** If I have understood the argument of the hon. member correctly, the hon. member is really putting to the House that if by way of notice set out by the committee to members something else comes up that was not expected it puts the members at a disadvantage.

• (1020)

Do I understand the argument clearly? That seems to be what flows from what the hon. member from Gleggarry—Prescott—Russell has said. At the moment that is the complaint. I suppose what the hon. member is saying is that, given the fact that the notice set out something to be discussed and something else was discussed, that may or may not have affected who would turn up or how many people would turn up. That seems to be the gist of the hon. member's argument.