

*Point of Order—Mr. Dingwall*

I know the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) well. I respect him. In fact, I have great admiration for his skill, knowledge and experience in this House. Knowing his great respect for our parliamentary system, I am a little bit surprised at what took place in the committee. I do not want to prejudge him because I was not in the committee when these events took place, but maybe his partisan approach to politics prevailed over his non-partisan approach.

Quite clearly those who are chairmen of legislative committees have to understand that they are to act exactly like you, Mr. Speaker, are supposed to act in the chair, in a non-partisan way. Not only that, but with a certain bias, so to speak, in favour of the minority representation in this House. I think it is incumbent on you as Speaker to make sure that the Official Opposition and the third Party have a chance to express their views and make their points of view known and see that their arguments are heard in this House.

Quite clearly, if this is true for the House of Commons, it is equally true for committee, be it standing or legislative. I hope that in your good judgment you will reflect on that, because it is not the first time opposition Members have complained about some of the decisions arrived at in the standing and legislative committees of this House which do not take into account the proposals put forward by the McGrath committee. Certainly the intention is to allow back-benchers on both sides of the House, not just the Opposition, to play important and constructive roles in our committees. I regret to say that so far we have not seen evidence of government back-benchers taking advantage of the new rules. I do hope that in the near future they will wake up to this new reality.

Above all, I think it is imperative that those you select as chairmen of the committees, acting on your behalf, understand fully their role and their new mandate which is very different from that of previous chairmen of committees of this House. They must behave with more impartiality and independence from government Parliamentary Secretaries or Ministers' assistants who might be giving them orders. I believe this is a matter which should not be perpetuated, it should stop, and the sooner the better for all of us in Parliament.

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, I raised this matter some days ago. We have had our differences of opinion in the legislative committee concerned. We have had vigorous debates. However, the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) and I realize the Government has a majority of the members on that committee, as it does on all committees, and that what it wants to happen will happen. However, we have always assumed that decisions would be made after all members of the committee, particularly those in the Opposition, were made conversant with what the procedure would be. We should have an opportunity to discuss the recommendations proposed.

The day before this committee met and made the decision to which we are objecting the steering committee met and discussed a number of possible witnesses. The Hon. Member

for Cape Breton—East Richmond and I each made suggestions dealing with the possibility of inviting to appear before the committee certain American witnesses who could help us in the discussions we were holding. This was not turned down in committee. The Clerk was asked to get certain information as to whether these people would be willing to appear and what costs there would be and report back to the committee. We did not get that report.

The next day the committee met in regular session to hear delegations. As I indicated when I raised this matter, the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond left a few minutes early. I stayed. I accept the statement made by the chairman of the committee that he did not know this motion would be brought forward. Had the Hon. Member who moved the motion let me know that he intended to do so I would have stayed, we could have discussed it, and since government Members had the majority they would have passed the motion. We were not made aware that the Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River (Mr. White) intended to move that motion. That was wrong. I believe that when the Member for Dauphin—Swan River moved his motion the chairman of the committee should have stood the motion over to another meeting of the committee when members of the Opposition were present.

● (1520)

As I said the other day, I believe that the way the matter was dealt with in committee breached the rights and privileges which the Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond and I have as Members of Parliament.

**Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take too much of the time of the House. However, I believe there are a couple of points which must be made.

Two themes have run through the interventions of Members. The first is that there is a reflection upon the chairman for the way in which he handled this meeting and the meeting flowing out of it where the votes were taken. The second is that the Opposition was suppressed through the handling of this in committee.

I do not believe that anything close to a question of privilege, or even a point of order, exists. It is possible that a grievance exists in this situation, but the House must be mindful of whose grievance it is. In my own committee we have held up meetings while waiting for members of the Opposition in order to get reports approved or motions passed. However, a committee can only postpone its business for so long. It is important to note that members of the Opposition did leave before the end of the meeting. They must take some responsibility for their actions. I do not believe that the committee should be held hostage. It should not have to wait for the return of opposition Members to continue with its business. It is the responsibility of individual committee members to attend committee meetings and conduct business accordingly.