

Privilege

I have to ask then, if we do not expect the Chairs of our standing committees to follow some guidelines, some parliamentary procedure, practice, and tradition, are we saying then that anything goes? Will the Speaker ever intervene? Would the Chair intervene if the chairman of the finance committee had ruled and had been sustained on a disciplinary action against a member?

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, some weeks ago my colleagues, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and the member for Nickel Belt, maintain that they were threatened in committee. The Chair gave some indication that if they did not change the nature of their interventions he would have them forcibly removed from the room. Thank goodness that threat was never carried out and the Chair graciously apologized in this House a few days later, in other words recognizing that that type of decision, that type of action was completely inappropriate.

What if he had ruled that the two members be evicted from the committee? Would we not then feel compelled to intervene? Of course, we would.

Mr. Speaker, you must consider that there is a Standing Order which governs time allocation motions before this House, that had the government been committed to allocating time in that committee, there was a legitimate avenue through which they could have proceeded. There is a Standing Order which governs time allocation motions, and by that standing order the government could have approached the opposition parties on Monday of this week, given notice of time allocation later in that day, debated on Tuesday morning the exact motion which was given as a ruling later on Tuesday night. The point is that there clearly is an accepted procedure for the government to use if it wanted to actually curtail debate in the committee.

It chose not to. They chose to use some aberration of the rules, something that my hon. friend for Yorkton—Melville has quite frankly and quite rightly described as rather a dictatorial and jackboot tactic. I think we all agree that we cannot tolerate that kind of behaviour. The committees are an extension and a reflection of the work done in this House. We assume then that they should, as Standing Order 1 indicates, and as the rules

that provide guidelines for chairs of legislative committees indicate, that we expect follow the rules, procedures, practices and traditions of this House.

• (1550)

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon, mindful of the difference between a point of order and a point of privilege, and of the proper reticence you would show at any time dealing with matters arising in a committee.

I must at the outset insist that there comes a point when the flagrant and consistent abuse of order in a committee is raised, thereby from being simply a string of questions of order into a larger question of privilege, which is why I submit this matter is properly before you this afternoon.

In addressing the merits of the matter, I would like to start with the very first Standing Order of all our Standing Orders. It is the Standing Order which supplies you, Mr. Speaker, and the Chairs of the various committees with their authority, and it states:

1. In all cases not provided for hereinafter, or by other Order of the House, procedural questions shall be decided by the Speaker or Chairman—

It is clear that both you, Mr. Speaker, and any chairman of a committee, enjoy your procedural authority in those cases not provided for. I would submit that in the actions undertaken by the hon. member for Mississauga South, the Chair of the finance committee, last night he, to a remarkable degree, engaged in actions abundantly provided for elsewhere in the standing orders.

We must start on the clear basis of Standing Order 116 which states:

116. In a standing, special or legislative committee, the Standing Orders shall apply so far as may be applicable—

That is the basis for most of the rules of order in committee.

To examine first the question of the deemed withdrawal of the motion by the hon. member for Ontario: as was already pointed out this afternoon, it is a matter that is provided for in the Standing Orders. It is provided for in Standing Order 64 which states:

64. A Member who has made a motion may withdraw the same only by the unanimous consent of the House.