

neither of the Opposition Members were there—and I am one of them—was a breach of my privileges as a Member of this House and of the committee.

**Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot):** Mr. Speaker, it is with unusual reluctance that I rise to make a comment on the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). I open with those comments because I am the chairman of the legislative committee on Bill C-22. I will be precise in my comments and I will not in any way enter into the subject area of the debate that is before Members of Parliament at this time because of my role as chairman of the that committee.

● (1510)

As you know, I attempt to chair that committee in the same way you adjudicate in this Chamber. I am a servant of the committee, not its master. The Hon. Member for Dauphin—Swan River (Mr. White) said this morning that I indicated from the Chair that I would have to assure myself we had a quorum. I was informed by the Clerk that the motions previously passed related to having a quorum for the hearing of evidence and that at that time the committee had a quorum with respect to motions. Therefore, when a motion was moved I allowed that motion to stand on the advice of the Clerk. The motion was put, voted upon and passed.

With respect to the question of whether the time for the meeting had lapsed, my stop-watch indicated we had a full 10 minutes remaining in the time for examination of witnesses. So it is inaccurate to say that the time had lapsed.

I set out those facts because they may be germane to a decision you may have to make. I also want to apologize for involving you as the Speaker in what ought to be the internal affairs of the committee itself.

**Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with great difficulty concerning this issue. What we had decided was that the purpose of the meeting today was to adduce evidence from witnesses who have very strong beliefs concerning this Bill. I notified the Chair that I had to leave the meeting because of a prior commitment. I asked him if he would undertake to obtain certain information from the witnesses and I presume he has done that. However, at no time were we informed up to that point that this would be up for discussion as a procedural matter.

I suggest very humbly that the rules of natural justice have been breached. There was no notice whatsoever. We did not have an opportunity to debate both the procedure and substance of the motion put forward by the Government. Members of the Opposition, whether they be Liberal or NDP, have rights. You would think government Members would want to give us every opportunity, as well as members of their own Party, to discuss the substance of the motion. Yet it was pulled in by members opposite when they knew members of the Opposition were not available. Therefore the motion passed. I find that to be unfair, unreasonable, and a breach of

my rights as a Member of Parliament. It is totally unacceptable.

I ask you to reflect on my comments as well as those of my colleagues. We are not here to try and interfere wilfully with the procedures of this committee. However, it has to be said—and I will not say anything about the substance of the motion—that government Members are running roughshod over members of the Opposition. That is not fair.

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I have two or three points I would like to add to this discussion.

I believe it is appropriate for you to consider that the committee passed a motion on December 11 which said that when the committee meets to hear evidence at least one member of the Opposition must be present. It is very clear that the meeting held earlier today was to hear evidence. There is a long tradition around here that if a committee is considering altering its procedures concerning witnesses, it is a matter to be discussed by a steering committee. That committee then comes to an understanding and takes the motion back to the full committee.

Upon completion of the hearing of evidence members of the Opposition felt that that was the end of business for that sitting and decided to leave. It was at that point, when only government Members were left, that there was a change to the whole procedure regarding witnesses who would appear before the committee.

It is important to recognize that this meeting was called to hear evidence, not deal with the future order of business, particularly when it is on a Bill as serious as this. It seems only fair that a steering committee would examine it first and then make a recommendation for the whole committee to consider, with all members present after being fully notified.

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington):** Mr. Speaker, I was in the committee this morning. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) left early, as he said. I saw him advise the Chair that he was departing and he asked for some information, which I am sure is coming along. The NDP Member on the committee left with, according to my watch, about 12 or 14 minutes still to go.

We had a matter to consider, that being whether or not we would hear certain witnesses. Of the proposed witnesses one was an American Congressman. It is my understanding that we do not appear before American congressional committees as Members of Parliament. I turned down an invitation to appear before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee on the basis that is not our custom, and we felt it was probably improper for a Congressman to appear before our committee. There were three other American witnesses who we just did not feel had any reasonable contribution to make to our committee. Therefore we moved the motion that they not be heard. I do not see anything wrong with that. The committee acted within the rules and I do not believe there is a question of privilege here.