

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Riis:** The report has been submitted and accepted by the House. The point being, now that it is before us, it is an item on which we can comment. My view is that I ought to have the opportunity at least to be heard in terms of the procedural acceptability of the House receiving this report. It is the first opportunity we have had to make the point.

I look now to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether or not you will hear me for a few moments while I make the case, not to reiterate, I might add, what was raised in the House the other day but on a new point of order.

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member of the New Democratic Party appears to be referring to citation 821 of Beauchesne's sixth edition which reads:

- (1) All rulings of the Chairman may be appealed to the committee.
- (2) There is no appeal to the House from the Chairman's ruling except by way of a report from the committee.

If the committee were to report to the House in respect of some matter; in other words, if the committee were to ask the House for a ruling, then it would be appropriate for the House to rule.

To suggest that in fact we could now go back and somehow annul the decision taken by the committee chairman, approved by the committee under a vote, because the general subject matter of the committee, namely the bill, is now back in the House is to distort the meaning of citation 821, very clearly.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** I want the hon. member to know that I appreciate what the government House leader and the hon. member for Kamloops are saying.

He cannot re-argue what he has argued before. I would like him to state whether there are new arguments and, if so, I will give him the opportunity to present them.

**Mr. Riis:** Mr. Speaker, let me make it perfectly clear that I am not asking that what was done in the committee be somehow undone today. As I indicated, I am not suggesting a repeat of the previous day's arguments.

I have a single point of order I wish to make. I want to take a few moments to make it because I believe this is a most important matter. I would suggest that the chair of a committee has no authority to invoke closure in that

committee the way it was done in this instance. What is being used by the chair of the committee as a precedent ought not to be accepted as such. That is the point I want to make in some detail with the Chair at this point. I do not want to take up much time, because I recognize it is an opposition day and I want to keep my comments very brief.

As I said, I consider this matter to be one of the most important procedural questions that we will have to consider, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, in our term of office.

As I indicated, the chairman of the finance committee mentioned last week that Speaker Brandt raised this issue 100 years ago. Whether Speaker Brandt's solution was a service or a disservice to parliamentary democracy is a very debatable point. What is not debatable is that it changed forever the balance in the House of Commons. If the solution of the hon. member for Mississauga South as chairman of the committee becomes precedent, there is little doubt that it will leave as profound and long lasting a change to the equilibrium of this House as did Brandt's decision in Westminster.

For this reason, I think it is imperative for the House to reflect carefully on the proceedings of this committee and I hope you, Sir, will permit me a few moments to express our concerns.

I do not think we can in any way consider the proceedings in the finance committee last week to be merely a series of events and decisions, as you, Mr. Speaker, described the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs back in June 1984. I must say, like it or not, a precedent is now being set.

First, the chairman of the finance committee used the Lachance incident as a precedent. It was repeatedly referred to as such in the finance committee, even after the Speaker's caution last Monday that "neither this House nor the Speaker gave the incidents any value whatsoever in procedural terms."

The point is that the chairman of the finance committee on numerous occasions, as I sat in on that committee proceeding, repeated time after time that this was the precedent he was quoting: the Lachance decision back in the justice committee in 1984. If this incident is now used as a precedent, what then will two such incidents become? They will obviously become tradition and con-