

Routine Proceedings

to see the removal of a particular chairman, obviously it infringes upon that member's capacity to do his job if the meeting is cancelled by the non-show of other members of Parliament.

I know, for example, that on Tuesday, October 16, there was a headline in the *Hamilton Spectator*: "I wash my hands off Harbour Commission. Scott". Certainly there has been a debate in the city of Hamilton about whether members on all sides of the House are discharging their responsibilities and making sure that the public trust is honoured in this particular case.

Obviously that has not been the case. There are some who do not want to do their job. On this side of the House, we want to do our job. The member for Hamilton West and the Liberal transport critic were infringed in that right today by the decision of the Tories not to participate, and effectively to muzzle the transport committee which is taking charge of this dossier because the Minister of Transport will not. So I think there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege.

If you do find this so, Sir, we will be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear by now, certainly it was clear to me some time ago, that what we have is a complaint. We do not have, I believe, a question of privilege.

Ms. Copps: It's a muzzling. It's a muzzling.

Mr. Hawkes: All three opposition members have brought up the issue of attendance. At the beginning of September of this year there had been 1,143 full committee meetings in this session of Parliament.

Ms. Copps: What are we getting paid for?

Mr. Hawkes: If they want to talk about attendance, Mr. Speaker, we would be glad to provide them with a record of the number of times that there were no representations from the Liberal Party or the NDP. The only reason the meetings could proceed is because government members were present.

I would remind hon. members also, Mr. Speaker, because they raised the issue of a meeting this morning, that the normal practice in this Chamber is for consultations to occur to set up an agenda. They chose to go a route where no consultations took place.

Ms. Copps: That's false. They can't proceed without opposition members present.

An hon. member: That is a lie.

Mr. Hawkes: Our members—

Mr. Speaker: There may be a difference of opinion about what is being said, but I do not think we need to be shouting about lies. The hon. member for Calgary West.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, they used the provision of the Standing Orders to cause a meeting to occur.

My members had alternate plans for the use of their time at the same time as the meeting was called. We had an option; we could have sent substitutes, but in our opinion the subject matter was too important to not have at least a reasonable proportion of regular members in attendance.

More importantly, on what they would like you to believe is a question of privilege, they are indicating that somehow their privileges have been affected because they are blocked. The Standing Orders require on an annual basis, within ten sitting days of the commencement of a Parliament, that the membership for Standing Committees be reported to the House and one of the very few decisions, other than naming members, that lies in the hands of the Striking Committee is to name the size.

• (1130)

Those decisions were made and that report was presented to the House. The Whips on the opposite side named their members to sit on the committee and everything was done according to the rules. All of a sudden the opposition, not the government, blocked the coming into force of those committees which had been reported to the House by the Striking Committee.

If the opposition has complaints about the functioning of committees, I would suggest that the only people, from a party basis, who might have a question of privilege because of the difficulty in committee are the members of the House who are willing to support the Striking Committee report. Those members who are not in support of that report are, in effect, blocking the continuation of committees in a normal, functional and effective fashion. It is in fact those who rise in the House to address you, Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege that have the solution in their hands. They can move at any time the adoption of the committee report, a debate