

of an electronic *Hansard*, was not to result in delaying the report of the committee. That was the only condition I had put on the televising of this committee's proceedings. The fact the proceedings would be televised was not, for any consideration, to allow the committee to report later than December 9.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I conclude by repeating that in the next few minutes I shall take steps and consult in order to determine whether, without limiting the rights of anyone, we can come to an amicable agreement about the televising of those proceedings as quickly as possible, provided the fact the debates will be televised does not result, first, in delaying the report of the committee and, second, in hindering the work of the committee. Even if the televising should start in a few days, that should not prevent the committee from pursuing the work it has started. Third, I would not want either to prejudice the decision of the Senate which will necessarily have to be consulted regarding that matter, because it is a joint committee. I would not want to place the Chair or the other commissioner of internal economy under any obligation, but I do not see that this would be a major problem, since I am one of the commissioners of internal economy and have already mentioned this issue to some of the others, and they do not see any problem in this regard. That takes care for now of the issue of televising the committee proceedings.

There is a second issue involved in the comments made by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). Concerning the report of the committee, he read, in the English version of Beauchesne, section 591, on page 193, which says the following:

● (1550)

[English]

A special committee ceases to exist at the moment its final report is presented to the House.

[Translation]

It is interesting to note, Madam Speaker, that the French version is more explicit. If you look at the fifth edition of the French version of Beauchesne, on page 197, you will find the following under section 591—and the wording is so different in the French edition that section 591 contains two numbered subsections, while the English version has only one paragraph:

(1) Il importe que la motion proposant l'institution d'un Comité mentionne que celui-ci doit faire rapport de temps à autre, car s'il le faisait une fois sans autorisation, il cesserait d'exister.

It is therefore quite obvious that when the House considered the motion, it knew or should have known that the wording of the motion did not authorize the committee to report occasionally. In this case, the procedure seems to me relatively clear. There is a difference between the English and French versions of Beauchesne, but no contradiction. The French text is much more explicit and much more complete, and I thought it my duty to inform the House of this difference because it is always a good idea to have a complete picture rather than half-truths.

Privilege—Mr. Knowles

Madam Speaker, this is what I had to say about these questions which, essentially, are not questions of privilege, but we are willing in this case, as we have always been, to co-operate and show our good faith.

[English]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. I am pleased to learn from the government House leader that his government is prepared to reconsider its position which, to this point, has been one of refusing to allow television and radio coverage of the discussions on Canada's constitution. I do not know in what position the comments of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) in relation to a decision of yours leaves the Chair. That is a matter you will have to decide as, indeed, you will have to decide what interpretation it would be appropriate to place upon the comments offered by the President of the Privy Council in relation to certain of your advisers. That is a matter for you to consider as you review his remarks.

For my part and that of my party, I can simply say that on many occasions we have learned to interpret your opinion as a ruling. That is probably the position that is held by most members of this House of Commons. I regret that it should be put into some question by the government House leader, but that is a matter you will have to consider.

I want to make one or two points. One is certainly that a decision by the government to reconsider its refusal to let television and radio into the committee should not be seen as disposing of the question of privilege because, if they continue to persist in that refusal and not let the public know what is going on, the question of privilege will be very much alive.

● (1600)

I think it is also obvious to all of us, since there appears to be some doubt on the other side as to whether Your Honour's decision is a decision in the letter to the hon. member for Don Valley East (Mr. Smith), that it is going to be important for all of us to have clarified exactly what is the capacity of a committee of this House of Commons in relation to having television and radio coverage of its proceedings.

If I might, I would like for the benefit of the House—I know Your Honour needs no reminding of it—to review the elements upon which Your Honour based your decision in your letter to the chairman of the Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped. You were referring to the deliberations of the Special Committee on Television and Radio Broadcasting of the Proceedings of the House and its Committees, and you went on to say, and I quote from your letter:

With regard to standing and special committees, the committee submitted a report to the House which, among other matters, stated that it would be contrary to the order of the House for any radio and television coverage to take place in any standing or special committee on TV and radio broadcasting.

A motion on the order paper, during the 31st Parliament, which would have appointed a special committee to supervise the implementation of radio and television broadcasting in committees was not debated before that Parliament dissolved. To date, during the current Parliament, no further action has been taken in respect to the broadcasting of the proceedings of committees. Failing