

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 16, 1964

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. GRÉGOIRE—MEETINGS OF RAILWAY
COMMITTEE DURING FLAG DEBATE

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege with reference to the statement made in the house by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) on June 10, 1964, when he introduced a motion to refer the annual budgets and reports of the C.N.R. and T.C.A. to the standing committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines. At that time the Minister of Transport said:

I can assure all hon. members... that any substitution of membership desired by any party will be promptly made by the whip.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in respect to the sittings of the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines, the substitutions desired by our party have not been made, because we were informed too late that the representatives of the C.N.R. would appear this week before the standing committee.

This happens at the same time as the very important debate, mentioned yesterday by the Prime Minister, on the Canadian flag.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we feel that the Minister of Transport, as he always did in the past, should today comply once more with his statements and see to it that the standing committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines will not sit as long as the matter of the Canadian flag will be before the house, first of all, because of the commitment he made on June 10 last, as stated on page 4142 of *Hansard*, right hand column.

Second, we ask that the committee should not sit this afternoon or this evening for the very important reason put forward by the Minister of Transport this morning, in the committee, when he said that he could not be present at the sittings of the committee because of the very important matter now before the House of Commons.

Third, we think that this committee will not be able to sit, not only this afternoon,

this evening and tomorrow but as long as the flag matter is being discussed, because we think this matter is very important and the Prime Minister himself saw fit to mention that it is very important and that we were living historic days in Canada.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I appeal personally to the Minister of Transport, because I know he always complied with his undertakings in the past, and I ask him to see to it that the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines does not sit during the debate on the flag.

[Text]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Perhaps in the absence of the chairman of the committee I might say that I did go to the committee meeting this morning. Being rather old fashioned I thought it would be in the railway committee room, and I was late. In any event I am not a member of the committee, but by the time I got there the committee had made a decision to sit at different hours. This is a decision of the committee and is not appealable, as I understand it, to the house. I do not see how we can do anything about it unless perhaps the chairman might consider, in view of the historic importance of the proceedings this afternoon, having the committee meet at five o'clock.

I am just saying he may do that, but that would have to be arranged behind the curtains, sir. It is not the business of the house. So far as the undertaking I gave is concerned, it was with regard to substitutions. I am told the notices were sent out two days before, and I am quite sure that my hon. friend the chief whip would have made the necessary motions if he had had them in his hands.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Transport to be more explicit. Instead of saying that this can be arranged behind the curtains, if the minister took it upon himself to recommend to the committee that they avoid sitting during the flag debate, I feel that the chairman of the committee, who is a distinguished member of the Liberal party, would gladly accept his suggestion.