

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I cannot remain to continue the discussion personally. Parliament has a perfect right, as parliament, to refuse to decide a question; but I do say that it is carrying things rather far when a committee of parliament refuses to reach a decision in order that parliament itself may determine—the House of Commons itself may determine its course of action. It is well known that a question respecting these bills cannot reach the House of Commons save on a report from this committee. The House of Commons itself can determine whether or not it wants to make a decision; but I do submit in all seriousness that one of its committees by the agency of what appears from the votes to be a minority of the committee, should not deprive the House of Commons of its right to make a decision on a matter. That is my opinion. That is my opinion as a member of the committee.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: Now, Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order on this statement of the Minister of Finance. It is now a quarter past ten. This committee did not get a quorum until twenty minutes past nine. We have been sitting fifty minutes, and those fifty minutes represent the first time that this bill, as it now is, has been before the committee.

Mr. MARTIN: Why?

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: Never mind. This is the first time it has been before the committee.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I am speaking of the general proceeding.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: Now, the minister who is a gentleman whom I personally hold in the highest esteem, suggests there has been, and he said by the votes of the committee—he inferred tactics unbecoming to a parliamentary committee, as he says, to prevent something going through. Now, I claim that we have a perfect right to analyze and discuss these bills fully, and I object to the statements he has made. He has not been here. Today was the first time he appeared before this committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Oh, no.

Hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: Wait a minute—the first time he has appeared before this committee since this bill came before the committee.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I will answer you in a moment.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: I am not blaming the minister. I know what he has been up against; but my point of order is that the statements of the minister reflect upon the members of this committee and the conduct of the committee, and is not a statement that should have been permitted to be made to the committee.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: Mr. Chairman, on the point of order. Even a minister has a right to his opinion with respect—

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: He has no right to lecture the committee—no more right here than a private member.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: He has no more, but he has as much. He is a member of this committee, and he has as much right as any other member of the committee. The opinion I expressed as to the principles upon which committee business should be conducted is my opinion, whether this committee or another committee.

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: And you have a perfect right to it.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I have a perfect right to it. Now, with respect to my own attendance, let me relate it—

Hon. Mr. STEVENS: I said frankly, of course, that the minister had excellent reasons for being away.