

Transport Departmental Changes

is no question of privilege. The point is very serious, and I have come to the conclusion having taken all circumstances into account, that it is a grievance rather than a question of privilege. This grievance could be presented by the hon. member when the House is considering the motion for concurrence in the committee's report.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I have listened to your kind remarks with great interest.

However, I wish to point out to you that this is precisely the point. If the House agrees today that the committee's report be presented, this will mean that we—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to assure the hon. member for Lotbinière that I understand perfectly the point he is raising as well as its importance. But having considered all the aspects of the question—and I had this opportunity for a few moments before the opening of the sitting—I had to arrive at this conclusion. I said so to the hon. member. I may not have considered all the aspects of the question. In the next days, I intend to look further into the matter. But, for the moment at least, I must arrive at the conclusion that the question of privilege cannot be raised. It could possibly be when the motion for concurrence in the report is introduced but, there again, I cannot assure the hon. member that his question of privilege will then be deemed in order. In the light of the circumstances, it would be preferable to abide by the ruling I have just made.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I brought a motion before the House and I should like to know whether it has been ruled out of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member must realize that the motion can only be introduced if the Chair recognizes that the question of privilege is well taken. If the Chair feels that there is no question of privilege, the motion cannot be introduced.

[*English*]

TRANSPORT

TABLING OF STATEMENT ON CHANGES IN DEPARTMENTAL ROLE AND STRUCTURE

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41 (2) I am now tabling in the two official languages a statement on the changes to be made in the role and structure of the federal transport portfolio.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. This is the first opportunity I have had of bringing up the point. The Minister of Transport has just tabled a statement on the changing role and direction of the Department of Transport. As I understand it, he issued a press release on the subject this morning and went on television and told the nation about these changes. If we in this House are to be responsible to our constituents, then we must make sure that the cabinet, the executive branch of government, is responsible to the elected representatives of the people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Horner: The House ought to be made aware of the devious manner in which the government is destroying the worth of Parliament. For the minister to make a statement outside the House about a vital matter before informing the elected representatives of the people is, I submit, wrong in principle. I wish to bring to the attention of the House and the country the fact that the government, by acting in this way, is slowly eroding and destroying the very principles upon which our parliamentary democracy is founded.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The point raised by the hon. member for Crowfoot has been raised on previous occasions by other hon. members.

Mr. Horner: Not often enough.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member says "not often enough". I am not sure that I agree with that statement. In any event, the point has been raised in a very serious way from time to time by other hon. members. It is a matter of interest whether there is a point of order or a legitimate question of privilege as to whether hon. members of the House have the right to receive information from ministers prior to statements being made outside the House. That is the very point raised by the hon. member.

I recognize that the point is well taken. The point has often been raised in the past, not only in the last two or three years that I have been associated with the Speakership but on many occasions in previous years, that statements have been made outside the House which perhaps ought to have been made in the House. I am not expressing an opinion. There is a long series of decisions in the jurisprudence dealing with the matter raised