

Privilege

• (1500)

I must tell my hon. friend that I met with the parties in this dispute a number of times. I suggested to them that the best way to end this dispute would be for the parties to agree to binding arbitration.

The parties have refused. As a result, we appointed what we felt were the best mediators possible in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, Mr. Munroe and Mr. Reddy. They met with the parties. They prepared the report. After that was unsuccessful, I then went ahead with the appointment of an industrial inquiry commission which is now sitting. On top of that, there has been an additional request by a new union which has asked to be accredited. The Canadian Labour Relations Board is looking into that.

Therefore, labour department has done everything that is possible. I hope that after the recommendations of the industrial inquiry commission we will get a peaceful resolution of this dispute.

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CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism.

Over the last 18 months, there has been a great concern among retailers and tourist people in Canada over cross-border shopping. However it would appear that this problem is easing off somewhat.

Could the minister give us the current statistics on this problem? Could he also tell us what his department is doing to further remedy the situation?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister for Science and Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. friend that confidence in our economy is up. The Ernst Young report tabled today said 60 per cent of entrepreneurs are optimistic about the future.

StatsCan reports that same day auto travel to the U.S. moderated in December 1992 from the previous month. Auto trips of one or more nights have dropped 6 per cent from month to month. Also, cross-border shopping is down 20 per cent over two years.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—Chapleau on a question of privilege.

PRIVILEGE

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON BILL C-113

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of personal privilege concerning the decision by the majority of the committee studying Bill C-113, which includes proposed changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, to expunge the testimony of witnesses who appeared before the committee yesterday.

The censorship of this testimony raises a number of important questions for the functioning of this place on both procedural and substantive grounds.

This is a matter which affects the functioning of this committee but also affects the functioning of all committees of this House. If this decision is allowed to stand it unleashes the spectre of direct censorship of witnesses based on nothing more than the whim of the majority of the committee.

The majority of members on a committee have a number of options in accordance with the rules and traditions of this place. However, they do not have the right to expunge the verbatim reports of the proceedings of the committee.

In Beauchesne's sixth edition citation 106 clearly states:

Committee reports and the verbatim transcripts of committee hearings are documents published under the authority of the House and are entitled to the same absolute privilege as House documents.

If there is to be censorship of the evidence tendered before a committee of this House, history will have no record of the testimony on which the recommendations of the committee were based.

A member who wishes to dissent from a majority report would have no record of the testimony except for his or her own notes or recollection. How would that member or any other member at some later date be able to cite the testimony of a witness with whom the majority of the committee disagreed and whose testimony was expunged? This is clearly an infringement on the privileges of all members.

Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 827 states that a committee has the power to print a document entitled *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* for each meeting. Citation 827(3) goes on to state that "the evidence is a verbatim record of the debate of the committee".