

motion called for the subject matter of the events at Kanesatake and Kahnawake during the summer of 1990 to be referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs.

My concern arises from statements made by the chairman of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs to the media following the last meeting. He said in part, and I am quoting from *The Hill Times*: "I am not saying that somebody shouldn't look into this. I am saying at this stage the committee has a full agenda".

In the reporter's words, the member for Macleod said to the committee that the committee had a heavy agenda and could not deal with every issue. "He has suggested in the past that some issues could be handled by the justice committee".

The statements by the member for Macleod to *The Hill Times* lead me to the conclusion that he is not interested in having the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs act on the terms of reference presented to his committee by unanimous resolution of the House, or else he feels that someone else should deal with the issue.

I am concerned that the chairman of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs is interfering with the corporate right of this House to require committees to undertake reviews. Such interference can only be contemptuous of the authority of this House.

I would therefore ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule on the following questions. Can a committee refuse terms of reference referred to it by unanimous resolution of the House? Can a committee only examine a narrow aspect of the terms of reference assigned by the House rather than the subject matter in broad terms, as stated by the resolution in the House? Third, can a committee give low priority to the terms of reference assigned by the House in unanimous motion?

This is a matter of urgent concern for members. If we were to pass legislation with respect to the health and safety of airline passengers, and the airline or government agency decided not to accept the legislation, or to delay implementation, or to assign the legislation a low priority, members would be clamouring to the Speaker demanding action and respect for Parliament's decision. We should expect no less from our own standing committees and their officers.

Privilege

Mr. Ken Hughes (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak very briefly on this question as chairman of the standing committee. Of course I await your guidance on this, in response to the hon. member's questions and points.

It is important to note in your consideration, Mr. Speaker, that the committees are masters of their own fate in making up their agenda. In fact, the committee had an open public meeting the week before last, in which the topics to be determined or the terms of reference for the committee activity were discussed in public. We agreed at that point to come back at an early opportunity to discuss further the terms of reference of this particular study.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, for you to know that the committee is currently in the process of discussing the terms of reference of this committee in this particular study and other issues on its agenda.

It is also important to note that the most recent meeting was held in public, which meeting was reported on by the media, and that subsequently comments were made by members from all sides of the House. I just wanted to bring those matters to your attention, Sir.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I have heard enough. First of all, it is not a question of privilege, but I have listened carefully because I did not know quite where it might finally end up. It is not a question of privilege and, as hon. members know, it is not the place for the Speaker to interfere with committees.

Having said that, I listened very carefully to the hon. member for Macleod. The reason that I listened very carefully was that it is clear to me that the committee is still considering the matter.

I have said before that while the rule is that generally speaking, and certainly in most circumstances, it is not for a Speaker to interfere with the workings of the committee, I of course assume, having said that, that the committee is working. The hon. member for Macleod has made it clear that the matter is under consideration.

I am not saying today that if what was brought before me was an absolute defiance of an order of this House I might not have a different view of the matter.