

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 5, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

[Translation]

### PRIVILEGE

MR. COMEAU—EMPLOYMENT OF MEMBER FOR  
HALTON-WENTWORTH BY NEWFOUNDLAND  
DEPARTMENT

**Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova):** Mr. Speaker, since I am the first one to take the floor since the adjournment, I take this opportunity to offer you my best wishes for a good session, even though there have been some changes in the cabinet and the opposition has re-organized itself.

[English]

I rise on a question of privilege affecting all members of the House of Commons as the representatives of the people. Since July 15 the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Morison), chairman of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Regional Development, has been employed by the Department of Community and Social Development of the province of Newfoundland.

I do not quarrel with the hon. member having been hired by a provincial government, but his employment in this case appears to be in conflict with the House of Commons Act as it relates to Members of Parliament. I do question, however, the impartiality of the hon. member and his continuing as chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Development. This committee reviews the estimates of the department and is responsible for voting government moneys to carry out its regional development programs all across Canada, including the federal-provincial Newfoundland plan.

According to reports, the hon. member was working for the Department of Regional Economic Expansion liaison committee of federal-provincial officials and was employed as a consultant working with the committee to initiate the Newfoundland projects. Although I have much respect for the chairman of the committee, as a member for Nova Scotia may I point out that that province signed an agreement with Ottawa and is on the verge of signing a new agreement affecting a greater

part of the province; consequently I feel that the Newfoundland plan is much more liable to receive attention than others, and I sense a direct conflict of interest.

In conclusion, if the chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Development does not resign as chairman immediately, I shall move a motion, seconded by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), that this matter be studied by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

• (2:10 p.m.)

**Mr. J. B. Morison (Halton-Wentworth):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to reply to the question of privilege that has just been raised. I will pass over the first part of the question of privilege in that my seat in the House does not appear to be in question.

Before going to Newfoundland I checked with the Department of Justice and also checked with the House whether or not I was contravening the Act. The advice I received was that a precedent had been set before in connection with working for a provincial government and that I was not contravening the Act.

As to my impartiality as chairman of the committee, I should like to say to you, sir, that when I first came to this House I was amazed at the facility that you displayed here. That amazement became almost hero worship as the years went by. I thought this facility was partly due to your wit or personality, but as I watched you I realized that a great deal of your facility was based on knowledge.

I have been chairman of the Standing Committee on Regional Development for a couple of years. Over that period of time I would say that, apart from the time taken by one member from the east and one member from the west, most of the time spent on the work of the committee has been taken up by members from Newfoundland. I felt that if I were really going to do a job as chairman of that committee I should make myself aware of the situation in Newfoundland.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Morison:** The best way to do this, of course, was to get some first-hand information. If opposition members think I am