

Privilege—Mr. Knowles

with the broadcasting and the televising of the committee proceedings.

If the committee did receive the approval of the House, Mr. Speaker Jerome felt that committee was the logical committee to undertake the initiative to show what broadcasting and televising of such proceedings would bring about and how it would benefit Canadian people as a whole. Unfortunately, in order to set that precedent, the committee would have had to continue sitting into the autumn. It did not. It completed its deliberations in August and reported back to the House when it resumed in the autumn.

I wanted to point out that there had been discussions, that, indeed, a way had been foreseen as to how the proceedings of such a committee could be telecast and broadcast. It would be by reference to the House, as you pointed out in your letter, Madam Speaker. I believe that it is one of the matters which you should keep in mind in making your ruling later today.

[Translation]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Madam Speaker, I would like to say very briefly, as a member of the committee, that the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) referred to me earlier as a member from New Brunswick. My riding is, of course, Madawaska-Victoria. It is I who in committee this morning called the attention of all members of the joint committee on the constitution to the interpretation of Beauchesne about the order of reference which says clearly that we cannot make a report. We are not authorized to make any interim reports.

I thought it was my duty to draw this interpretation of Beauchesne to the attention of the co-chairmen of the committee. I do not want to impute motives to anyone, but listening to the debate today, I feel things are put in such a way as to make believe—and if it is not the case I apologize—that there had been some kind of collusion between the government, and the government House leader. I must say, Madam Speaker, that it is the duty of every member of any committee to see to it that the rules are followed. And my concern, as a member of that committee, was to make sure that by coming back to the House to request permission to televise its meetings, the committee would not automatically cease to exist. My motivation was quite honest and justified. We have the duty not only to seriously consider all the matters which are presented to us, but all committee members, in co-operation with the chairman, have the responsibility to make sure that the rules are properly interpreted and that the orders of reference are also obeyed and that our work is being done within the framework which has been approved by Parliament, in this instance by both Houses. That is what we did this morning.

The fact that the committee reached a conclusion disturbs me. This morning, the majority of its membership decided not to give radio and television coverage to its proceedings. It has been repeated time and time again and it has been the ruling of all past Speakers, all your predecessors, Madam Speaker, that the committees are free to make up their own mind. In so doing, this morning we operated within the framework of that authority given to us by both Houses of Parliament. Further-

more, I find it unbelievable that opposition members quite often accuse the government, and especially the government House leader, rightly or wrongly and without any justification, of always wanting to dictate to the members of the committee. As the hon. member for Provencher said this morning, we will have to get the litmus test before we can sit on the committees. I find it very hard to believe that he should come back today to the same point through a legitimate argument, I must admit, rising on a matter of privilege and on a point of order.

Today hon. members bring to the floor of this House a question which we should have been allowed to bring back to the House as a report, otherwise the committee would have ceased to exist. Today, they want the government to impose a decision upon the committee, they want the government to ask the House to allow the committee to reconsider the decision it reached this morning. This disturbs me because the decision was reached in due form, in good faith by all the members who were attending the meeting and, what I do not understand and what I do not accept, is the fact that the government House Leader is now being asked to impose a decision upon the membership of the committee. That is beyond all understanding.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not want to be involved any further in this debate but I mentioned in my remarks a while ago that I would be taking some action, that I would consult, and consider the matter, and that I would advise the House as to our position, if needed. If hon. members are interested in whatever I have to say, I am prepared to report right now. If the House would rather hear from you instead, I will resume my seat.

Madam Speaker: Do hon. members agree to listen to the President of the Privy Council who would like to report on the negotiations being held and on any information he might have received on the matter now before us?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: The President of the Privy Council has the floor.

• (1650)

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I want it to be very clear that the government has never taken a stand either for or against the broadcasting of committee proceedings and especially those of this joint committee. The position of the Right Hon. Prime Minister and myself in this House, as I said earlier, has always been that it was up to the committee to make this decision.

You, Madam Speaker, are now faced with a question of privilege. I shall respect your ruling, but I imagine that you might wish to refer to the comments which have been made and to do some research before giving your ruling and I imagine that you will defer your decision. If this is so, since the opposition members seem to consent to my doing so—and if they object, I shall abstain—I shall inform them that I intend to speak to the two co-chairmen of the committee to tell them simply that if, in the light of what has been discussed in this House, their committee wishes to reconsider its decision, the