

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker, other members, including the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, would have wanted to go with the Joint Committee across the country but did not and could not have access to travel funds.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will go further than that. I think and I was told—I would like you to check these allegations—that the New Democratic caucus even tried to use a subterfuge by having its own members go as researchers, in contravention of the rules of this House. If that is so, Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I that they would be violating not only the practices but also the laws of this country.

The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead thus raises a very serious matter. Mr. Speaker, all members of this House know that special provisions are required for a member to accept a cheque other than those to which he is entitled. An order in council is required for all members to go and represent a minister at the opening of a social housing project. I remember that practice, Mr. Speaker, and it took an order in council.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of the integrity and openness of this House, we ask whether any New Democratic members had their expenses refunded and whether they acted legally. If not, Mr. Speaker, we ask you to take strong measures immediately.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I think that the minister who spoke earlier, the House leader, totally missed the boat. His comments were not related to the two questions asked.

I rise because I am one of those who wrote to the co-chairs of that Committee last week, to ask them precisely the question asked today by the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead. I asked myself that question because I wanted to be involved and I was told, "Well no, Mr. Gauthier, you are not a member of the group. The six Liberal members have been appointed." So, I asked for the list of New democratic members, and I was told, "There are many of them but there is only one official member. The others take turns on the committee, on a regular basis." I asked, "Who pays for the travel expenses of these members?" and I was told, "I don't know."

I want to get an answer to those questions because it is important to know who is paying for this. While it is true

that committees are autonomous, it is also true, Mr. Speaker, that these committees must administer public funds in accordance with the strict guidelines of the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons, which ensures that those funds are spent properly.

So, the first question is: Who paid and why was this money spent on trips, hotels, and other expenses made by people who are not members of a committee? The second question is: On what authority did the Committee base its decision to spend on that? Again, I would like to receive an answer by letter or here in this House, to satisfy the curiosity of an hon. member who also wanted to participate in those meetings but cannot because the Standing Orders do not allow it.

I believe that these questions are appropriate. The question is clear and I think that the government missed the boat. I would like to get an answer.

Mr. Speaker: I listened with some concern to the statements by the hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, the Government House Leader, the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona and, of course, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Generally speaking, since the complaint has to do with the proceedings of a committee, this is not a problem that should be submitted to the Chair. However, in view of the circumstances and especially after having listened to those statements, it is probably appropriate for the Chair to consider these interventions or complaints, and it might be possible afterwards to give an opinion.

• (1520)

As I said, it is basically a problem that concerns the committee. However, in the circumstances, it may be that the problem has a wider scope. I would ask the hon. members to give me some time to take this under advisement and then to report to the House soon.

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POINT OF ORDER**STANDING COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO TRAVEL**

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Mr. Speaker, may I ask you if the Standing Orders allow the following. In the proceedings of the House of Commons for October 25, 1991, following Oral Questions, during Routine Proceedings, the Parliamentary Secretary to the