

Privilege

In this House in an S. O. 31 on October 11 charges were made and the damage was done. The charges are false. I believe they were known to be false but some rhetoric crept in, that people can use rhetoric in this place—

Some hon. members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Can I say something? We may be able to find a way to resolve this but I would urge that we do not make more charges at least while we are discussing what we are going to do with this thing. The hon. member for Calgary West.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, it might be helpful to us if you were to rise and say that you asked me to delay because I felt that as a charge, that I had asked for delay for the last 10 days. In fact, I think I was starting to present my question of privilege and you rose, and the record will show that the Speaker of the House asked me to delay until the member for Kamloops returned. I think the record will show that the Speaker asked to be notified when the member for Kamloops could be here. The record will show that I rose daily to ask if we had had word and I did acknowledge that, in a corridor I had heard from one staff person that the member for Kamloops would be in Ottawa probably late Thursday evening, but tried to get it on the record so that I could prepare and plan to be present. This is what has been happening.

I want to assure the House that if this item is referred to committee, I will have nothing to do with the choice of committee members. To believe that I would be involved in a conflict of interest of that kind, that I had a hand in the picking of the jurors, if you like, of a trial in which I was involved, is really to provide you, Mr. Speaker, with concrete proof that these allegations that are floating around are interfering with my capacity to serve my functions on behalf of this Chamber.

The very fact that it was raised on the floor that I, as chief government whip—and it was raised earlier in a different context—could have substituted somebody on the special parliamentary committee, and I chose not to because it has never been the intention of the government to dominate the committee. It has always been the intention to try to achieve 100 per cent consensus on everything that we have done for months.

To raise the issue that I, as chief government whip—and the context in which it was raised is essentially threatening the independent member—will, if they do not behave and vote the way I want them to vote, replace them is the context. There is a totally different construction. This is that I, as whip, had an opportunity to make sure that the government dominated the committee and I had not taken that opportunity.

It is a committee which agreed to function in a non-partisan fashion. When one leaves a non-partisan meeting and there is a press conference 45 minutes later slamming part of that consensus, one is in trouble.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is helping by continually repeating the very thing that has caused a lot of the anguish here.

The hon. member has risen and said that he ought not to be accused of attacking a committee. I do not think that is really the issue that I have in front of me.

I might say so that members understand, on a question of privilege, after there has been debate, it is for the Speaker to decide not the final issue, but only if there is a *prima facie* case. Then, if the Speaker decides there is a *prima facie* case, the matter goes to the House, this Chamber, and the matter can be debated and can be debated for a long time. Eventually, the House decides whether it goes to committee. When it then gets to committee—and what the House has then said is it thinks there is enough reason to put it into a committee—the whole matter will be heard by committee members and the committee will finally make up its mind. That is where the final decision is made.

In any of these questions of privilege, if I decide it is a *prima facie* case and if the House decides that it go to committee, those committees are invariably lopsided in the sense that a majority will come from the government side because that is just the nature of the thing. One would have to hope that, whether or not the committee has a majority on the government side, they would understand that they are sitting in judgment of their peers and would behave accordingly. That is what one would hope they would do.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I am sure if anyone is watching this performance or is listening in on this, it must confirm every suspicion they have ever had about this place. Here we are, hour after hour, costing taxpayers unbelievable amounts of money, and I