

The Chair can see that there is cause for concern here, that it is difficult to find a breach of the privileges of hon. members in the fact that a standing committee is paralyzed and cannot meet. The solution would appear to lie in negotiations among the parties, which the Chair would encourage at this time.

I have to say to hon. members and to the public that the working of committees is very important to the working of the House of Commons. I do ask hon. colleagues to make every effort possible to come to whatever agreements and understandings among themselves which are necessary to make these committees work.

I do not want to state this too often, and I hope that I will not have to, but there is a general feeling across the country that somehow or other not only politicians, but maybe institutions, are letting down the country. This is why it is essential that everybody make an extra effort to try to make this system work.

I am not happy with this situation, obviously. But, I am also bound by rules here and if I am to intervene in committees, it has to be in a very severe and outrageous situation indeed. While this is not only inconvenient but perhaps very aggravating, I do not feel that I can depart from the laws which bind me as they bind all other members of the House of Commons.

I thank hon. members for their intervention.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, as a member of that transport committee, I want to thank the Speaker for his decision today.

On a point of clarification, I wonder if the Speaker could clarify something for me. Am I to understand that the Chair is restricted to make decisions on issues only involving breaches of privilege out of the confines of this place?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton West rises on a point of clarification. I have made it clear in the past that I do not take the position, nor do I think a Speaker should take the position, that a Speaker is forever bound never to intervene in a committee matter. But, it will have to be a matter of very gross disorder indeed, a very grave situation.

This is a matter which can still be settled by consultation. The jurisprudence on this kind of a question goes back not just decades, but for a long, long time indeed, and not just to jurisprudence in this House but in other

Routine Proceedings

Houses where we have the parliamentary system. I am very reluctant to move into the committees if it can be possibly avoided.

What I want the hon. member and other hon. members to understand very clearly, I am not saying that there might not be an occasion in which the Speaker would have to move. One can say well, it has not been done before. Speakers have made decisions in the past that had not been done before, and they form part of the precedents of our law of procedure.

What I am asking hon. members in this case to do is please take into account everybody's responsibility to this institution and to our country, and try to resolve it. I think it can be resolved by discussion, and that is the way I would hope it would be resolved.

What I am saying to the hon. member, in summary, is I might have to intervene at some point.

• (1520)

It would have to be under a most grave situation, and I am reluctant to move into the committee field and do what really the members of the committee ought to do for themselves.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I would be honoured to table in both official languages the government's response to 95 petitions.

[Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STRIKING—PRESENTATION OF FIFTY-SIXTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the Fifty-Sixth Report of the Striking Committee. I ask that the Clerk at the Table be