

*Privilege—Mr. Knowles*

House, which was voted on and accepted by the House, must have precedence over any report from a subcommittee or from special committees which has not been endorsed by the House. What your adviser told you in that opinion, Madam Speaker, is that the special committee responsible for supervising the advent of television in the House had tabled a report some time in November, 1977. But one significant fact he forgot, or even if he did mention it—and no one seems to have taken that into consideration—is that that report is worth absolutely nothing from a legal standpoint, from a procedural standpoint, because the House never did concur with it. I feel it would be the height of stupidity to pretend that a report which has not been approved by the House must gain precedence over a decision or an order of the House. I am convinced that no hon. member would argue the contrary.

So, Madam Speaker, with respect I would suggest that the opinion given to you by your adviser in this instance does not take into account the fact that the report of the committee responsible for conducting that experiment has never been approved by the House. Therefore the decision of the House takes priority and that decision is explicit and very clear. We agreed that Parliament, that the House and the committees had the right to televise their debates. If at a given moment the special committee which no longer exists had deemed advisable to submit a report it would have done so. Its mission, and I was a member of the committee as was the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), was to supervise the experiment. We wanted to be certain that the introduction of television in the House, that this experience would show that it could be done while respecting the principle of electronic *Hansard*. This took place in 1977. I am convinced that if the special committee were still in existence in 1980, its recommendation would probably be different because, in the light of experience, experience which the committee did not have back in 1977 when it submitted its report which was not accepted by the House, it is obvious that the concept of an electronic *Hansard* can be respected when our proceedings are televised.

On this first point of the content of the letter, which is not an order of the House but simply an opinion, I say that the letter does not bind anybody, that the adviser who gave you his opinion on the subject forgot to attach enough importance to the fact that the report of the committee was never approved by the House and that he did not recognize the fact that we have a three-year experience of televising our proceedings, which can be of some benefit to the members of the committee, which makes them experienced enough to make their decision to televise their own proceedings. There is also, Madam Speaker, the fact we should face, namely, that this morning the committee decided against broadcasting the proceedings on television and on radio by 13 votes against 11. That is a fact.

Thus, the situation in which we find ourselves following the request made by my hon. colleague, the House leader of the

Progressive Conservative Party, the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, if we are to meet his request, is the following: on the one hand, we have to decide whether we may, without offending the committee members and without any disregard to that institution which is a committee of the House, intervene and say that your decision is not right and, on the other hand, we on the government side have to decide whether the committee proceedings will be televised. It can also be done by negotiation with the members of the committee in light of the new development, that is, the letter in question. Though we do not agree with its contents, and despite the fact the opinion it expressed at the very last minute, and the persons involved and concerned were advised of it a bit later, they can be consulted, as well as the House of Commons, and negotiations can be held with the House leaders. So, what I mentioned at the start of my remarks is this: subject to new developments or those consultations, Madam Speaker, which could lead to an agreement on televising those proceedings, I still wanted to dot the i's with regard to the lack of legal or parliamentary basis of the argument put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and those who spoke after him.

However, there is more. I said a while ago that we were, that I was willing to take steps in an attempt to try to give an answer in this regard to the House later on today, but I referred at that time to the attitude that has always been mine, as well as that of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), with regard to the televising of those proceedings. That attitude is this—I even remember the very words used then by the Right Hon. Prime Minister, specifically, that he was neither for nor against it, and that strictly from a procedural point of view he felt, as I still do, that it was up to the committee to decide on its procedure, including the televising of its proceedings.

For my part, I said that if it were only a matter of cost, in the case where the committee should decide or had decided on televising its hearings, two additional formalities would have to be respected. First, it would not suffice for the committee to decide that its hearings are to be televised; its decision would have to be ratified by the Senate since we are dealing here with a joint committee; and, second, I said that the commission of internal economy, under your chairmanship, Madam Speaker, would have to approve the expenditure. I have always maintained in this House that money would not be an issue, as far as I was concerned, that would prevent the hearings of the committee from being televised. Let that be clear. The stand I have always taken with regard to the televising of debates has always been the one I have just outlined, just as it has also been that of the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

So, in view of the circumstances, we have never said that the House of Commons was against their being televised: we said it was up to the committee to decide, the cost being subject to the approval of the Senate and the commission of internal economy. And there was one condition, that the televising of the proceedings, apart from not being contrary to the concept