

*Privilege*

the justice committee at that time was consulted about the propriety of the ruling that was to be made by Mr. Claude-André Lachance.

You should be aware that none of this happened in the finance committee, Mr. Speaker. We were never consulted either formally or informally about the ruling which the chairman was going to make.

The chairman cannot argue that this was a spontaneous ruling. He walked back into the finance committee at around 4.20 or 4.30 yesterday afternoon and said to us, in a pretty direct way, that a number of years ago Speaker Jeanne Sauvé had made a ruling pertaining to the ending of the bell ringing crisis here in the House of Commons and that he figured he had the power as the chairman of the finance committee to make a similar ruling. However, he did not elaborate as to what that would be. I questioned him, as did other members, as to what he was talking about. He obviously had some papers in his pocket. He would not share his information with the opposition.

I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in 1984 Mr. Lachance did share the information with the opposition. He consulted the spokespeople in the opposition parties, they had a discussion about it and because there was no agreement as to the procedure, Mr. Lachance decided to go ahead anyway and deem that the committee be adjourned.

None of this happened last night, and I can assure you that none of it happened officially and formally. That is a known fact. I can also assure you that there were no informal discussions that I am aware of between the chairman of the finance committee and any member of the New Democratic Party. I do not know what happened between the chairman and the Liberal Party, they can speak for themselves.

This was compounded in the House of Commons today when the House Leader for the government said: "We followed the exact parallel of what happened on June 6, 1984". Those are his words. That is wrong on at least two counts. In 1984, there was some consultation between the then chairman of the justice committee and members of opposition parties. That did not occur in 1990 in the finance committee in terms of the procedure

that the chairman used last night as the members across the way know. They will not say that publicly, but we were not consulted, we were not informed and we were not asked about this particular procedure, so the exact parallel was not followed on that count.

• (1540)

In conclusion, in 1984 when the then chairman made his ruling, he offered to resign as the chairman of the justice committee because he thought it would taint the work of the committee on Bill C-9. That was on June 6. For your information, Mr. Speaker, two days later on June 8, Claude-André Lachance did resign.

In Question Period the minister across the way said he was reappointed. He was reappointed on June 26, but only after the unanimous consent of all the members on that justice committee, representing all three political parties.

I maintain that the precedent was not followed. I maintain that the precedent was wrong in 1984, and still wrong in 1990. Even if it was right in 1984, there was a major difference between what happened on June 6, 1984 and what happened yesterday in the finance committee.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule in favour of these questions of privilege. It affects my privileges as a member of Parliament. We were subject last night to something that was extremely anti-democratic. There was no consultation, and that infringes upon the privileges of all members of Parliament.

We are elected to represent our constituents. We are elected to make their points of view known. We are elected to facilitate debate. We are elected to bring those points of view to Ottawa, to bring witnesses to Ottawa, to represent them in terms of amendments, suggestions, improving or rejecting legislation, which is what we want to do with the GST.

I argue very strongly that the jackboot tactics of the government across the way are wrong in a free and democratic society. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that later this day you will rule that the government and the chairman of the finance committee were wrong in what they did to us, and to Canada in terms of closing off the freedom of speech.