

Privilege, Mr. Baldwin

Mr. Baldwin: In trying to substantiate this fantastic direction, this attempt to direct the operations and the decisions of committee chairmen, the hon. member cites a ruling made by the Chair in a situation that developed in the House on June 18, 1973. Your Honour will, of course, recall that particular discussion.

At that time the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) attempted to move concurrence in a report of the committee on transportation and there was a very interesting discussion in which I, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and other hon. members participated. The question was on the very narrow ground whether that report of the committee, which had been dealing with estimates, could be the subject of a motion for concurrence in the House. We had an interesting discussion and Your Honour postponed your ruling and then came up with one of those fine, intelligent, reasonable and objective rulings which have made this House from time to time a better place to be in.

An hon. Member: Don't push your luck.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Is there any place you would rather be?

Mr. Baldwin: At that time Your Honour said that in the first instance, very specifically, such a motion could only be moved on an allotted day. That is of interest to us today when we find the government running away from allotted days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: At any rate, that was the narrow ground upon which Your Honour made your ruling. You did indicate at the time that in your view, and I think quite properly because I found myself in agreement with Your Honour, not only because you are the Speaker but because your decision was right—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin:—there was a collateral point, an *obiter dictum*, in that a recommendation in a committee report of a substantive nature which appeared to deal with the expenditure or proposed expenditure of money was not one which could be dealt with in a committee report through a motion to concur in that report. I think that was the gist of what was said. At that time the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River did make a very strong and spirited attempt to put forward the same views he has put forward in this letter. I objected to that, as did the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), but Your Honour did not rule on that ground.

As a matter of fact, Your Honour referred to a previous ruling in a previous situation in 1969 when on an allotted day there was in the House a debate on the following motion which I moved:

That this House concurs with the views expressed by the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates relating to the use of \$1 items
[Mr. Baldwin.]

in estimates as set out in paragraphs one and two of the fourth report of the said committee on February 28, 1969.

At that time that committee, with due regard to its responsibility to examine with care and scrutinize with exactitude expenditures made by this government, saw fit to include in its report a collateral recommendation as to these \$1 items. We undertook through the motion which I moved on an allotted day to ask for concurrence in that recommendation.

● (1410)

It was not a day on which we voted. We had a very good debate. I will always remember that debate. It took place on March 3, 1969. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre made the very serious charge that parliament has now lost control over the public purse. I hope he still holds that view. In light of that fact I think it is absolutely unforgivable that a member of this House who happens to have a semi-official or official position with the government, not as high as he would like to go but maybe higher than he should be, should undertake to dictate to the chairmen of standing committees, hon. members who have very responsible positions, as to what they should or should not allow to be discussed or included in the reports of those committees. I am not moving a motion, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: I would hope that as a result of this debate the hon. member in his official function will be relegated to the duty he performs best, that of saying no to motions under Standing Order 43.

Mr. John M. Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have been the subject of a 15-minute speech by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). I assure him that what was done was done on my own authority.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Reid: As you know, Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable debate in the House of Commons with regard to exactly what the powers of standing committees are, particularly with reference to the making of reports on estimates. I was approached by a number of committee chairmen as to what rulings there had been in the House of Commons which would indicate to them what powers committees have to make reports to the House on estimates.

I recall very well debating the point raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and I recall the ruling. I obtained sufficient copies of the ruling and elucidated what I thought were the main points of the ruling in a covering memorandum. I then sent this memorandum to committee chairmen on all sides of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, in interpreting your ruling it may have been that I erred. If I did err I apologize to you and to the House of Commons. If there should happen to be in your view, Mr. Speaker, some reason to believe that