

Lambert). Then the Chair would like to hear argument on the point of order stemming from the remarks made by the Chair yesterday.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, if you will note, I indicated to the Deputy Speaker that I might wish to add further remarks before there was a ruling. At that time, I had an indication that in 1970 your predecessor, Mr. Lamoureux, had discussed this matter. He had not made a ruling, I say with the greatest respect to Your Honour. Our former colleague from Crowfoot objected at that time to committee reports being one month late, which was frustrating the work of the Agriculture Committee in drafting reports and in considering legislation. The then Hon. Member for Lotbinière, who was Leader of the Social Credit Party, had also indicated that, because of that Party's representation in the House, members of his Party were not members of many committees and, therefore, could not participate in the discussion of legislation because the committee reports were so far behind. I am not alleging that committee reports are far behind now. At that time the delay was one month. If one refers to the discussions at the time, in May of 1970, one finds that I raised a question with regard to the Finance Committee and the tax proposals which we were then considering.

I take it this way. First of all, yesterday, those of us who are not members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs had no knowledge of the amendments, discussions or attitudes taken by the members of the committee, including the government Members. We are as entitled as any other individual. Every Member of the House has the right to examine and speak. That right must be protected by the Chair.

It has been seriously suggested sometimes by administrative officials and others that Hon. Members can go into the administrative catacombs of the House of Commons, to the committee section, and look at the "blues", which are the typescripts that may be on file, or they may use the telephone. Sir, I reject out of hand the notion that these are facilities available to Members to enable them to do their jobs properly.

Few, if any of my colleagues, could deal yesterday with Bill C-9 and the amendments which were put forward at report stage. May I say that the rules specifically provide that a committee report shall be filed and that within 24 hours before the debate is taken up on that report, Members have the opportunity of putting amendments. How can they learn of amendments if they were not members of the committee and if they have no printed reports? How can they possibly introduce any amendments? Any Member has the right to introduce an amendment. It is not limited to a specific Member, to the critic or to someone else from the Party. This is the right of every Member of the House. It is on that point that I raised this matter yesterday.

I fully understand that, perhaps, today I am in an academic situation because the four delinquent reports which were missing yesterday were delivered to my office this morning. That is all very well. That has dealt with that situation as of now, except for this: The debate having started on report stage, Members are precluded from introducing any further amend-

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ments, which they have the right to do. However, they did not have the information because the committee report—the evidence—was not available to them.

This situation may arise again on another Bill in which we are at present interested. Sir, I serve notice right now that I will watch this situation very carefully. It is my contention, and this was the intention of the procedure committee of which I was an integral member in 1969. The House procedure was changed with respect to sending legislation to committees and with respect to Bills being reported back by the requirement that a 48-hour time period elapse between the presentation of the report and the commencement of any debate. It also provided for a 24-hour period with regard to amendments.

It was patently clear at that time that the committee chairman's report would have to contain the evidence. Reference to that was made in the report. It is not sufficient, particularly with this Bill when a stack of documentation which is perhaps two feet high if not more is tabled with a committee report. It is appended, it is included and it should be there. I repeat that it is not satisfactory. As a matter of fact, I would almost term it a sort of self-serving cop-out for anyone to suggest that Hon. Members could have reference to the typescripts which exist somewhere in the committees branch, or that one could resort to the telephone and make inquiries from a clerk in the committees branch in order to find out the necessary information.

I submit that I have a true point of privilege with respect to my ability to work as a Member in this House. That ability is being impeded and infringed upon by the non-availability of the printscripts of committee evidence which accompany a chairman's report on a Bill.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, my comments will not be lengthy, however, I wanted to rise in support of my colleague, the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). As we all know, he is a former Speaker—one of your predecessors in the Chair—to whom I pay a lot of attention, as we all do.

I wanted to make an additional observation with respect to the circumstances in this particular case. It will make the point made by the Hon. Member for Edmonton West even more germane and appropriate as a question of privilege. In this particular instance, the circumstance which developed was unprecedented in committee history, to my knowledge. Only those Members who attended the committee sittings had direct knowledge of and access to the information. The only way in which the rest of us could have had an opportunity to determine what had transpired, would have been if we had received a transcript of the proceedings of the committee. The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, who ultimately submitted his report with respect to the deliberations of that committee, in fact unilaterally moved to impose—without any authority under the rules—closure on the debate within the committee.

The point which is being made is that in normal proceedings in which there is no controversy or limitation on the part of