

This Parliament makes, I believe, a clear distinction between votes and proceedings, and I believe that if the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake examines the exact text of my statement in the House, he will find—although I recognize that he will consider some of the invective to be disagreeable, and I intended it to be disagreeable to him—that what I was reporting was the vote and not the proceedings.

The nineteenth edition of Erskine May, at page 146, refers to proceedings. It does not refer to votes. There is a clear distinction in this Parliament. After all, we do have as part of our parliamentary documentation a publication which we receive every day entitled *Votes and Proceedings*. If votes, in fact, were proceedings, then there would obviously be no need for them to be differentiated as they have been, obviously, for some length of time.

● (1130)

I believe that I was reporting an abuse of procedure and an abuse of the spirit of the committee system in this Parliament. I would like to point out that five members of the Progressive Conservative Party came to the meeting in question. One of them, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, the Hon. Member for Nunatsiak (Mr. Suluk) left before the recorded vote was taken. He left because of a different matter, although he did say before leaving that he had not attended any of the series of hearings in question.

I would say that politically I grew up in a committee system which was not parliamentary but which was in the context of work done in voluntary organizations and in the context of work done at the municipal level. I believe that there are some principles of committee operation and committee function which have not perhaps been codified, not perhaps been adopted by the regulations of this House, but nevertheless some principles which apply to committees, whatever their nature. One of those principles is that members who are unable for whatever reason to attend meetings place some trust and some faith when it comes to key decision-making in those members who are able to attend the meetings.

This committee held six hearings on the subject matter of the proposed report. It saddens me to acknowledge that of a total of 24 attendance opportunities for the members of the committee who voted against the presentation of a report in a recorded vote that only five were taken up. This means an average attendance by the Progressive Conservative Members who stopped the report from coming to the House of less than 25 per cent.

However, I am pleased to report that the opposition Parties in those six hearings had 100 per cent attendance, and I think that is something that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have been listening carefully to the Hon. Member. Since this is an important matter I did not want to intervene in case there was some immediate

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relevance between the issue upon which I have to decide and what the Hon. Member was pursuing.

I believe that the Hon. Member is moving somewhat away from the issue upon which I have to decide and getting on to the question of which Members were at which particular meetings. The Hon. Member will know that there is a convention in this place that there is not to be comment with respect to the attendance of any Member or any Minister at either committee hearings or, in fact, in the House. The reason for that is quite obvious. Hon. Members are called upon to conduct a variety of obligations and responsibilities each day and each week and there are many times when Members are not able to attend to all matters to which they might wish to attend. Of course, the Hon. Member knows that this matter was adjourned over because he was properly involved in another matter and could not be in the Chamber. I point that out because that is of course why we have the rule.

I know the Hon. Member would want to remain within the rules so I would ask him to continue his comments to which the Chair is listening very carefully and which are cogent; but I would ask him to please stay with the basic issue, that issue is whether or not in view of what the Hon. Member did say in the House that that has in one way or another breached the privileges of the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) or other members of the committee who were meeting in an *in camera* meeting. That is the issue which the Chair has before it. I would ask the Hon. Member to continue.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Speaker, I accept your correction on that point and I thank Your Honour. I would like to extend my thanks to the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) for having this matter held over until today.

The essence then of my case, if I might sum it up, is that by the exercise of the operation of the taking of a recorded vote, the *in camera* meeting was in essence suspended, the taking and reporting of that recorded vote to the House is not on a level or footing with the reporting of proceedings to the House, which I did not do.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Hon. Members, both opposite and on this side of the House, for their indulgence in hearing my case.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair would like to ask the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry) a question. As I take it, the issue, as the Hon. Member said, in defence, is the distinction that the Hon. Member draws between the recording of a vote and the proceedings of the committee itself. That seems to be the narrow point which the Hon. Member is asking the Chair to consider. Is the Chair correct in that assumption?

Mr. Parry: Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is correct. I acknowledge that that is, as Your Honour puts it, a narrow point.