

Point of Order—Mr. Beatty

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, I will be brief. On this point the government House leader keeps referring to the three stages the government has chosen for the manner in which the proposed resolution should be dealt with. He says that the government was forthcoming in the matter of the three stages. No matter what his view or interpretation is on whether the government was forthcoming or not, the fact is that the matter is before a committee, so that committee has to function.

There are a number of motions which I intend to move this evening in terms of the working of the committee which might result in committee members making the decision to come back to this House and ask for permission along certain lines. The way the matter stands now, before we go to that committee at eight o'clock tonight, it is still that if we do not get a ruling prior to that time, the point will be made that if the committee makes those requests, by the very fact that its requests will be made in a report to this House the committee ceases to operate. I suggest, with all respect, that the matter should be clarified before that committee reconvenes its sittings at eight o'clock tonight because those issues will be before it at that time.

Madam Speaker: I am afraid hon. members are asking me to rule on something which is quite hypothetical. I now have Beauséne citation 591 which says, and I quote:

A special committee ceases to exist at the moment its final report is presented to the House. The report cannot afterwards be sent back to the committee with instructions to amend it in any particular way unless the House agrees to revive the committee by adding the following words—

Obviously, if and when that report comes back to the House, the House can agree to something else, and it is not for me to determine in advance, not knowing what that committee will report back to the House, what is going to happen. Therefore, there is no need for me to rule on this particular point, and I would like to proceed with the routine proceedings of the day, if I have the permission of the House.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, this has been a detailed and confusing day for all of us. Perhaps the point has not been made as clearly as it should have been.

We are not concerned at this stage about the final report, although that is an important matter. What we are concerned about is the right of the committee to make an interim report because there may well be an interim report, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has suggested, recommending that there be an amendment in the reference to allow televising and radio broadcasting of proceedings. There may be an amendment allowing the committee to travel. There may well be an amendment allowing certain groups of people to be paid to come to give their views on the constitution. Those would be interim reports, and the argument put forward by the government House leader is that once an interim report is issued, the committee is dead. Naturally, if that is the case—Your Honour is shaking your head, and we shook our heads too, but that is what the government House

leader said—the committee will be meeting tonight on other questions in the same circumstances in which it met this morning on the question in relation to television.

The members of the committee will be meeting under what they take to be an edict as to what they are not free to do. They met today and believed they were not free to ask for radio and television coverage, so they did not. Unless this question is resolved, they may meet tonight believing they are not free to make an interim report, and they will consequently not make an interim report. That is why it is urgent that the question of interim reports—not of final reports—be resolved.

Madam Speaker: If I may answer the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) on the point, as I read the citation, it seems to me that the special committee ceases to exist at the moment its final—not interim—report is presented. As I understand the rules, that committee can decide that it is making an interim report to this House. Therefore, if the report is an interim report, the committee still exists.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Madam Speaker, I respect your interpretation of the English version of Beauséne, but for those of us who use the French text there is ambiguity. It is not clear, it is far from being clear. If I read the reference of the House—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I did not read the French text, but the logic of the English version is absolutely impeccable and I would be surprised if the translation were that far off. Still I take note of the comments of the hon. member but I cannot accept his intervention because I have already said that the question is closed.

* * *

● (1730)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Knowles: Madam Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton would not like to be reminded that today is Thursday.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I want to thank my hon. friend for his reminder of the calendar. The government House leader may have some announcements in mind with respect to the business of the House for the next little while. Perhaps he could make them.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, today is the last day of debate on the budget. There will be a vote this evening at 9.45. Tomorrow we will begin study of the report stage of Bill C-6,