

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 10, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

## PRIVILEGE

MR. BALDWIN—OBJECTION TO CERTAIN INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege which affects the rights and privileges of every member of this House in a very serious way. I have given Your Honour the notice as is required, of course, by the Standing Order.

I have here what purports to be a copy of a letter written by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, presumably, with the rigid discipline that applies in this case, including the consent, knowledge, and approval of the government House leader. It is dated March 26, 1974. There are three very brief paragraphs which I feel I must read in order to lay the foundation for the development of this very serious breach of privilege by the hon. member.

The letter is addressed to committee chairmen and the subject is committee reports and estimates. We have heard of papal bulls; this is parliamentary bull being handed down by the hon. member.

The second paragraph states:

For your information and guidance—

This is the hon. member giving guidance to the committee chairmen who presumably have or should have the qualities of the Chair in regard to independence and objectivity in their approach to the problems that are placed before them. To begin again, the second paragraph of this amazing letter states:

For your information and guidance please note that reports from standing committees dealing with estimates should—

The letter does not say “ought”; it says “should”. It continues:

—consist of approval, reduction, or elimination of estimates only.

The word “only” is in capital letters and underlined.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** That is very sound procedure.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I am glad to see that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is an instrument in this direction from the top down to hon. members of the House including most of them in his own party.

**Mr. Trudeau:** On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to inquire from the hon. member how he reaches that conclusion?

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Quit clowning.

**Mr. Baldwin:** The third paragraph of the letter states:

Reports of a substantive nature, including recommendations on items relating to or contained in the estimates, are clearly not allowed.

That is our great Caesar over there suggesting that recommendations of this kind are not allowed, and this is a direction to the chairmen of standing committees.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Sound procedure.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I could read a lot more, Mr. Speaker, but I will content myself with the last paragraph which states:

In carrying out your responsibilities vis-à-vis the committees' consideration of estimates, please try to ensure that this principle is at all times maintained.

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**An hon. Member:** How can you get up on a point of order?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** This is a question of privilege.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I would just suggest that the hon. member table the letter in view of the fact he has quoted from it extensively.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hees:** We are always glad to do that.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Hees:** We are straightforward, honest chaps and we are always glad to do that.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. May we have order, please. The rules do not provide for the tabling of letters except official documents that are read for use in the course of a debate by a minister of the Crown.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Stanfield:** You had better go back to Beauchesne, Allan.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I would only say in that regard, Mr. Speaker, that if the government House leader and the Prime Minister will come to my office after orders of the day I will be glad to read them the letter.

**An hon. Member:** And read them the rules, too.