

namely: Have the practices and rules of this those been offended?

I feel that has been done in two ways. In the first place, I think that it is an affront to Parliament when a committee is set up which consists of members of only one party in the House. In the second place, I think that something is wrong when the government is able to provide money, whether it is only \$9,000, \$9 or hundreds of thousands of dollars, for a purpose not usually handled in that way.

● (1250)

I emphasize the fact that our rules are very extensive on the setting up of committees. Standing Order 65 is the main rule in that situation and, of course, it provides for appointments to those committees, by virtue, first of all, of there being a striking committee. That striking committee works hard at achieving a fair balance among the members of the standing committees. The striking committee had nothing to do with this Conservative committee.

I also point out that the standing committees are given certain powers, one of them being the right to send for persons, papers and records, and then the right to print their reports. In other words, when a standing committee spends money printing its report, it has been given that authority. But even a standing committee cannot travel, cannot have any expenses for travelling or hotels or what have you, unless it gets a special order. Yet here we have a committee which was not set up under Standing Order 65 but which has printed the results of its work, has done some travelling and had it paid for out of public funds.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the matter is as serious as was suggested the other day by the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Ethier), and as suggested today by my colleague from Yorkton-Melville. We know there are other such committees, and the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) I believe is the head of one of them. Perhaps he is a one-man committee doing the same kind of thing on the subject of branch lines. As I say, our provisions for committee structure are well set out. We cannot have a special committee without a special motion, and no committee, standing or otherwise, can travel or spend money without the authority to do so.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski), for whom I have a great deal of liking and respect, answered quite straightforwardly that he believes there is an order in council. It is nice to have that straightforwardness, but what he is telling us is that the government got around the usual way of setting up a committee and providing money for it, since it was a committee of the government side only, by passing an order in council instead of using the rules of this House.

I dare to hope, Mr. Speaker, that the arguments that are being made, and your own emphasis upon the seriousness of the issue, may lead the government to reconsider its position and discontinue this practice completely. The government can avoid your having to make a ruling on it. As someone behind

me suggests, the Conservative party should pay back the money that was spent on this task force.

*Privilege—Mr. Nystrom*

All the caucuses in this place set up committees. We have committees. We have two members right now, the hon. member for Saskatoon East (Mr. Ogle) and my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie), who form a committee concerned with health and social matters. They are pursuing that work, as charged by our caucus, by travelling. They are in the Atlantic area right now. They are able to travel to some extent on the basis of the members' travelling privileges which we have, but there is no hotel money and no money for meals. When they come back and draft a report, nobody on the government side is going to print the document.

But there is this report. It is a very official looking document with a maple leaf on it and it is put out by the Government of Canada through the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. This one also gets translated. We would not even think of asking for our two-member committee, to which I just referred, to have government support or funds out of the treasury. They are doing their work at the request of caucus and they are paying their own way, except for the fact that they do have the right to travel, just as any other member of Parliament has the right to travel. But in doing that they are using up some of their flight privileges. They have no government staff, no translating staff, yet on the government side this has happened.

As I say, I respect the concern of the Minister of Transport to find ways to solve the problem. I request his suggestion that there are probably some good proposals in this report. That is not the issue any more than it was the issue for my good friend to suggest that this is a partisan operation. In any case, we have ruled that out of the discussion. What is involved is a committee structure, a committee set-up, which is not provided for in Standing Order 65 at all. The government has got around that and got around the business of providing money for the committee by having it done by order in council.

I argue this not so much as a matter of procedure or rules, so as to try to get Your Honour to make a ruling, but more in the way of making an appeal to the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Baker) to reconsider this whole matter. They should be expected to discuss it today because they have known about it. This question has not been sprung on them today. The hon. member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell raised it some time ago, and my friend the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville put his question on the order paper on November 7.

I thank the Minister of Transport for giving a frank answer, but under four different headings payments were made to the total of \$9,000. The government have had plenty of warning. They have postponed a decision on the issue until the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) had his chance, Mr. Speaker, but this really adds up to a pretty serious aberration of the committee practices in this House.

I commend the Conservative party on putting its backbenchers to work. That is a good idea. I think in fact, if I may say so without attracting the ire of my friends over here on the right,