

Privilege—Mr. Allmand

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I find it unfortunate that I feel an obligation to rise on this Question of Privilege this morning. This is a time of year when we are trying to facilitate the business of the House. All Parties are trying to co-operate. We also recognize that the committees are an extension of this House, that the work done in the committees is a reflection of what happens in this House and vice versa.

I believe it is important to recognize this as a unique situation for two reasons; first, the committee was intending to deal with the Unemployment Insurance Commission's approval of the hiring of strike breakers in the Post Office.

Mr. Lewis: Not true.

Mr. Riis: This makes it unique. This is not a typical piece of committee business. I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary not to interrupt. We all listened to him carefully.

Mr. Lewis: Tell the truth. This is hearsay, and you know it.

• (1010)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, that deserves a comment.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East has raised an alleged question of privilege. I have listened to the Parliamentary Secretary who has made his points effectively and succinctly. The Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap has the floor. I would ask all Hon. Members to extend the courtesies to that Hon. Member that were extended to both the other Hon. Members in this intervention.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to make the point that we are dealing with a very special situation here today at a time when the co-operation of all sides of the House is required. We are dealing with a situation in committee regarding a matter that concerns us all, that is, the impasse between Canada Post and the letter carriers and the hiring of strike-breakers. This is an issue that deserves attention by the appropriate committee, the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration. That is what is behind a great many of the concerns that we have had in the last 24 hours.

Granted, Standing Order 92(2) indicates that within 10 days of receipt by the Clerk of the Standing Committee of a request signed by any four members of the said committee the chairman of the said committee shall convene such a meeting. Let us also recognize that by its Standing Orders the House will recess on Tuesday. In other words, if the committee chairman were to fulfil the intention of Standing Order 92(2) he could, by following that rule, call for a meeting in September. Obviously, the issue facing us today regarding the hiring of strike-breakers by Canada Post will be an academic issue come September, at least we all hope so. The issue is now; it is before us now. That is why the Hon. Member has indicated that the privileges of the minority members on the committee have been obviously violated.

Considering that we are about to enter into the summer recess and the fact that the hiring of strike-breakers is a matter of urgent and pressing necessity for the committee to deal with now, it is not unrealistic for Hon. members on this day to be concerned that, in spite of the request, the chairman of the committee has not given any indication whether or not there will be a meeting. I simply want to speak in support of my hon. colleague's concern that the privileges of Members of this House have in fact been breached.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to make some very brief comments about the question of privilege raised by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand). First, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader (Mr. Lewis) argued against the validity of the question of privilege on the basis of Citation 76 of *Beauchesne*. I point out that Citation 76 is in the Fifth Edition of *Beauchesne* which appeared years before the provision of our Standing Orders which the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East relies on in support of his question of privilege. In fact, that section of our Standing Orders was made permanent only a few weeks ago. Thus, I would respectfully submit that the citation is of questionable relevance and validity with respect to the section of our Standing Orders upon which the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East relies, especially since as far as I am aware that section did not exist at the time that *Beauchesne's* Fifth Edition was published.

Second, if Your Honour looks at the citation itself, the context of the language seems to be with respect to the conduct of witnesses and their failure to attend or to refuse to give evidence rather than the type of situation which the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East is talking about today. If the point made by the Parliamentary Secretary is correct, then members of a committee could decide for themselves whether any of the Standing Orders referring to committees apply to them. I respectfully submit that such a conclusion urged upon Your Honour by the Parliamentary Secretary is patently ridiculous.

The committees of the House are subsidiary bodies of the House and subject to the Standing Orders of the House the same way as the Chamber itself is subject to those orders. Surely, if a committee or the majority of members of a committee are unwilling to follow the Standing Orders, and they are not in a position to decide whether or not the Standing Orders apply to them, then surely this is a matter for Your honour to decide upon as Speaker of the House responsible for applying the Standing Orders to the House and any and all of its subsidiary bodies.

I submit that it is clearly a matter touching upon the privileges of all Members of the House whether or not a committee or a majority of members of a committee follow the Standing Orders.

The Parliamentary Secretary attempts to play down the significance of four members of the committee having made a