

Members' Business. Otherwise, one might as well forget about one's Private Member's Bill or motion. It will be lost in priority to Members who have been given the status of votable items. That is why a Member's privileges are affected by the actions of the committee.

Who cares who is on the committee or what decisions they make? What matters is that a Member can no longer process these matters of Private Members' Business in the way a Member could prior to the changes. Mr. Speaker, that is what you must focus your attention on—what has happened to the private Member in this process.

I do not need to add anything to the words of the Hon. Member for Peterborough. He has explained fully his situation. He had what could be considered an appropriate item for action by the House of Commons. Many others have had similar items. However, the committee has intervened in a process which has been in force for centuries in the British Parliament and side-tracked his motion. It put it on the dump heap. It will no longer be of any real interest because an adjudication has been made. That is why his privileges are affected. That is what happens to any Member who is subjected to the scrutiny of the committee and does not receive a favourable judgment. That is why someone should look at the process and ensure that the rights of Members are protected in all situations.

I said that I do not think the membership or processes of the committee are at issue in this matter of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Peterborough. However, from personal experience I want to make two points which have been raised in the debate by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) and by others. There is absolutely no justification for *in camera* sessions. I cannot agree more with my colleague who said that unless the light of day shines on any parliamentary process, it is worth nothing. One cannot meet behind closed doors in any public forum, especially not in the Parliament of Canada. It may present difficulties. It may work to the disadvantage of Members who have their proposals criticized, but the whole purpose of the Parliament of Canada is to make all aspects of its operations open.

I also want to point out that Standing Order 36 is very clear on some of these matters. First, a Member who has a proposal selected by the committee must be consulted under the rules. They cannot brush it aside and say, "We are going to meet and decide; we do not like this proposal". They have to consult with the Member. It is not a matter of privilege. It is not a matter of saying, "Be here at ten o'clock or lose your chance", if one is down in New York and cannot come before the committee. That is the requirement of the rules; consultation is required. A second point which is very clear under the rules is that it is the merits of the items alone which determine whether they should be selected at the committee.

What does that mean? I do not know if it can be cited in the context of a question of privilege, but it is very clear to me. One looks at the item and, if it is a good item and it is worth the attention of the House, it should be brought to the

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attention of the House. I cannot imagine how one can work procedures, other availabilities, and other forums into that decision-making process on the merits of the matter. One can do other things with a motion or a Bill. One can advertise it or put it in the newspaper. However, this is the Parliament of Canada. The purpose of the exercise is to get it before the House, get the attention of Members on it, and get the matter decided upon by the House of Commons. Anything that stands in the way of that ultimate end affects the privileges of a Member of Parliament. If it affects a Member in an adverse or unfair way, it is a proper matter for study and adjudication by the House of Commons.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I want to enter into this discussion for a couple of reasons, one being that I was a member of the McGrath task force and was involved in the drafting of this process. When the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) first addressed the Chair, there were two elements in his case. However, since that time it is like the pebble having been dropped into the pond, and there have been ever-widening ripples. I want to deal with a couple of the ripples as well as the substance of the Hon. Member's intervention.

I find the whole discussion of the matter of *in camera* meetings a little unusual. It has been a long accepted practice of the House of Commons and it is very important to the House. I would argue that to take it away would put the various committees in a very difficult spot when it comes to drafting of reports, such as the Board of Internal Economy, the Standing Committee on Management and Members' Services, and various other committees studying matters *in camera* around here. I would argue that this particular committee certainly has a justification for holding its final decision meeting *in camera*, in that any other Member who attends and has a Bill or motion before the committee would obviously be in a conflict of interest position. That must be taken into account.

The second ripple with which I wanted to deal is the argument made by my hon. friend who spoke prior to my intervention. He indicated that somehow Hon. Members' rights had changed in a negative way in terms of their Bills and motions since there were reforms to Private Members' Business. That escapes me completely.

As I understand it, those Bills and motions can proceed much as they did before. In addition, an Hon. Member has the right, opportunity, and chance to have the motion go one step further, that is, to a vote or decision of the House of Commons. As all of us know from practice, it was a very rare circumstance.

I should like to deal with the substance of the intervention of the Hon. Member for Peterborough. I do not believe he has a point of privilege. However, I think there is a serious point of order here and perhaps a role which the Speaker will want to play in terms of advising the House or making a reference to a committee, if that is the route the Speaker chooses.