

Within the rules of the House, a committee has a life of its own and is subject to one master—the House itself. I submit that the Standing Committee on Human Rights has acted within the rules and traditions of this honourable House and has not offended the privileges of any Member of Parliament.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), I advise the House that the proceeding at this time arises out of a matter raised some days ago. The Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) indicated that he had been away from the country and wished to contribute to the debate. I indicated to him that rather than send the Chair a letter or discuss the matter directly with the Chair, it was more appropriate that he raise the matter in the Chamber. I know the Hon. Member for Hamilton East was notified of that and graciously acceded to the suggestion. However, I just want Hon. Members to know that they may seem to have heard this debate some days ago. They did, but as the Hon. Member for Scarborough West had returned, I thought it appropriate that he be heard.

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I will not repeat the arguments made at the time of the original point of order. However I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider the remarks of the Hon. Member for Scarborough West (Mr. Stackhouse) today. He said—and I quite agree with him—that the decision about whom to call is a committee decision.

If we look at the follow-up to the original motion to call only 7 people before the committee as opposed to the 16 originally agreed upon, 7 names were not supplied. Therefore, an executive decision was made by the chairman that he would call certain names without having them approved by the committee subsequent to the initial meeting. If he is arguing in the House that the committee makes the decision on whom to call, that particular provision has been clearly violated by his decision to choose or hand-pick certain members to appear before the committee today. They were not chosen by the committee. They were chosen by the chairman outside the committee. The committee has not approved them. He has violated the premise which he put forward in his statement today.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Mr. Speaker, had the Hon. Member attended the last meeting of the committee, she would have been aware that such authority was given to me as chairman by the committee, that is, the authority to replace the names of members who would not or could not be present by selecting from the list of available nominees. It was a decision taken by a majority of the committee. The committee has the authority to give the chairman such authority, and it was supported by the member of the committee representing the Hon. Member before the committee that day.

I had the unanimous support of the committee to make the selection. Certainly it is entirely out of order, as well as entirely incorrect, to call into question my exercising an authority granted to me by the committee and my responding to a request by the committee without which we would not be

*Privilege—Ms. Copps*

able to hold the meeting which is to occur in five minutes. I invite the Hon. Member to join me.

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, there is no intention on my part to impugn the integrity of the Chairman. I was pointing out that in the consideration of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, you must consider all arguments.

Earlier this afternoon the Hon. Member for Scarborough West put forward the argument that it was the committee which was to name the people to come before it for examination. I am simply pointing out that I hope he withdraws that part of the argument because it does not bear up to scrutiny. The committee in fact abrogated that responsibility. It handed it over to the chairman, and he was allowed to hand-pick the people to appear before the committee this afternoon without any further consultation with the committee. Either the committee chooses or the chairman chooses or the Conservatives choose, but they cannot have it every which way.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) is not deliberately misleading the House. Unintentionally—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I assure all Hon. Members that the Hon. Member is correct. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East is not deliberately misleading the House.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Let me say this for the information of the House and in view of the remarks made. The point is that the committee did not grant me the right to decide the number of members who would be called.

**Ms. Copps:** The names.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** That was a committee decision. That was what we were debating in terms of the point of order raised two weeks ago. At that time there was not a single reference to the names of the appointees to be called.

The procedure to which the committee agreed at its last meeting was that each of the seven members, including the Hon. Member for Hamilton East, would have the right to select one appointee. If that appointee did not or could not come, and if the Hon. Member in question did not name another member, the Chairman could select from the available appointees another person to take his or her place.

I was responding to and complying with that ruling of the committee. The principle which I put forward in my remarks regarding the point of order remains germane, namely, that the committee made a decision within its rights to change the number of appointees to be called. That is the issue.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair has listened carefully to this additional argument on a matter of concern to a number of Members and to the Chair. I thank the Hon. Member for Scarborough West for his total co-operation with the Chair's suggestion that the matter be heard in the Chamber rather than in the Chair's office. I also thank the Hon. Member for Hamilton East for her co-operation.