

Mr. MacEachen: We regard it as a matter of debate, of dispute, and not a matter of privilege. But in order to ensure that the facts are studied properly and in the proper form we are ready to accept the motion put by the hon. member for York South. If he will agree and the House will agree to accept this motion and to send the matter to the committee without debate, the inquiry can start tomorrow.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We may be going beyond the point of the question of privilege or the procedural aspects of the question of privilege. I would not want hon. members to become involved in a debate when it has not yet been determined that there should be such a debate. I would certainly hope that the President of the Privy Council will again limit his contribution to the strictly procedural aspect of the matter. Having said that, I am not sure how far we should go in responding to the comments just made by the President of the Privy Council, whether there should be further points of order, further questions of privilege. Perhaps it might be wise to allow the matter to rest at this point.

• (1530)

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): That's a commitment, Bob.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for York South rising on a point of order?

Mr. Lewis: I am rising on a point of order, but very briefly, Mr. Speaker. We are happy to accept the government's belated arrangement, which it should have taken the initiative in proposing.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the hon. member just one moment because we certainly cannot get involved in a debate now on which motions are acceptable and which motions are not acceptable. That would be unfair to other hon. members who have placed motions before the Chair and on which no ruling has been made. I believe the hon. member says that his point of order is coming to a conclusion. I will hear him to that conclusion.

Mr. Lewis: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I was merely going to conclude, having said we would be glad to accept that, as I am sure other members would, by asking the minister whether now, or on motions, he will carry out his acceptance of my motion and move it today?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I said that this should be without debate because we have other government business before the House. If we can pass it without debate, as I stated, then I will put the motion on motions.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Agreed.

25020—43

Public Accounts

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE OF AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMPLAINT OF LACK OF STAFF TO PERFORM DUTIES AND SUBMIT REPORT ON TIME

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I would like to move, seconded by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis):

That the complaint of the Auditor General that the government has failed to provide him with such officers and employees as are necessary to enable him to perform his duties, as required by section 56(4) of the Financial Administration Act, and his consequent failure to submit his report in time, be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and that the said committee hear the Auditor General and other witnesses and report its recommendations thereon not later than March 29.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. For a long time now I have been threatening hon. members with the possibility of a motion from the government under Standing Order 43, and apparently this is what we are getting at this time. Hon. members have heard the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are very happy to accept the motion on the understanding, of course, that you are still going to consider the questions of privilege that have been raised.

Mr. Speaker: Of course the hon. member will realize that I will consider the questions of privilege, but at the same time, to be very honest, I would think that if this motion were accepted by the House it might have an influence, not an undue influence but some kind of influence, on the consideration of the matter by the Chair. I think it would certainly not be honest on my part to say that this would not be one of the factors considered by the Chair in deciding whether there is a matter of privilege before the House. I do not say it is the only matter that would be given consideration. I would certainly give every consideration to all aspects of the matters referred to by hon. members. I think that assurance can be given by the Chair, but I really think the Chair should not be involved in this at all. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is carried.
Motion agreed to.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

DISPUTE WITH NABET—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, after that successful effort I would like to try a motion under Standing Order 43. The matter is the impasse in