

Privilege—Mr. James

I raised the question of the obstruction in the committee work, and the fact that at some meetings there were as many as five Conservative Members who were opposed to the Bill, and raising preposterous questions—

Mr. Speaker: The other day the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) gave a full explanation of her grievances. Unless the Hon. Member has something specific to add to what the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton (Mr. James) has stated to the House and to the Chair, I do not think there is any particular need to go forward.

In reciting her grievances, the Hon. Member has stated that she was not blaming the chairperson, the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton alone, but was blaming others. That is helpful to the Chair, but it is not helpful to the Chair to receive a repetition of the extensive points raised by the Hon. Member the other day.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, on the question of the dates for the third and the fourth meetings, if I have the numbers wrong and they are the fifth and the sixth or the fourth and the fifth, that can be checked. But I was referring to the very extensive period of time over the summer. An alternative way to proceed would have been to appoint another chairperson, given that the chairperson of this committee was not able to act—

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the Hon. Member, and I am presently considering the comments that she made, as recorded in *Hansard*. As soon as possible, I will return to the House with a response to the application of the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood.

The Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton has risen on one specific item. He claims that it was alleged that he was biased. He has put on the record certain facts which he asks the Chair to consider and decide that, under those facts, the charge of bias is such that it affects his privileges in that he is not able to do the job that he has been elected to do. I will consider that.

Unless the Hon. Member has something which is new and that I have not heard before, I must ask her to bear with the Chair. I do have her comments. Of course, I will hear the Hon. Member, but I ask her to keep in mind that it is not appropriate at this time to restate that which was stated before.

If we are going to become involved in an argument about what dates were what, unless I am persuaded that it is very important, we are getting into an argument of fact, and that is not the easiest thing in the world for the Chair to solve.

● (1520)

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, I was replying to new information brought forward by the Hon. Member today, not repeating arguments of the previous session.

The Hon. Member made quite a to-do about timing and his availability. I was replying to that. I feel very frustrated that I

am not permitted to reply to that aspect. I thought he was raising a number of concerns, but it appears that you wish me to deal with only one of the ones he raised, namely, the question of bias.

I think the record will show, and you can have a look at the proceedings of the committee meetings, that I was frequently interrupted in the course of questioning witnesses, for example, by the chairman. Other Members were not interrupted or not frequently interrupted. Other Members changed the subject of the discussions. Other Members strayed completely from the health aspects. They were not interrupted, but I was interrupted. I am the author of a Bill. In effect, as a private Member I am a Minister in that capacity. I would have expected the co-operation of the Chair. Co-operation was, indeed, received with regard to scheduling witnesses, but in many things I did not receive any co-operation.

The question of the swearing of witnesses is another point. You may be aware, Mr. Speaker, of a situation in the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, when a Member asked to have witnesses sworn in and the chairperson of the committee facilitated in that. In this situation, I alerted the chairman of the committee of my desire to have witnesses sworn in. Whether or not he supported me, I do not know, but when the substitute chairman appeared there was this business of Conservative Members not appearing until my motion could be defeated. I do not know if the chairman spoke to the deputy chairman in favour of my request to have witnesses sworn in or against the person acting in his behalf—

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate again to interrupt the Hon. Member, but I heard this earlier. I have to remind Hon. Members that this is not the place to go into a long argument over and over again about what did or did not happen in the committees.

The Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) has made her point and stated her grievance. I will have to consider whether it is privilege, but she has made it with great vigour and she has made it extensively.

I have listened to the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton who has responded basically to the charge of the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood that his conduct was improper. He has put his facts on the table. Unless the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood is to rise and say that any of the facts which the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton put forward are wrong or that she disagrees with them, then anything else is of very little assistance to me. It may well have been that other Members did all kinds of things within the committee. It is not for the Chair to do other than listen to the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood, and she explained her grievances, as I say, with great vigour and extensively, and the Chair listened very carefully. The Chair cannot take up the time of Members to listen to them again.

I know the Hon. Member from Broadview—Greenwood feels very strongly about this matter, and the Chair is very