

Point of Order—Mr. Gauthier

I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that while I have no problem with that principle, it is its implementation that concerns me and, as Whip of my Party, there are times when I must be, let us say, somewhat stiff on discipline, but we will have to get used to working within and observing the rules, otherwise, we have chaos, Mr. Speaker, which is not appropriate, as we know.

This time, unlike what happened the last time, the committee allowed the cameras and the recording of this morning's proceedings.

• (1510)

[English]

I will not be very long, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to make my points very clear. May I repeat that I have always been in favour of televising the debates in the committees. It is a view that I share with many in this place. I believe it would be informative for Canadians—I have said that before and I repeat it—to see what is going on in the House outside this Chamber. Nevertheless, no such authority exists at this time, and I deplore it.

In January, 1977, the House approved the electronic *Hansard*, that is, TV in the House. The broadcasting of the House's debates and proceedings were provided by a resolution of the House and under the authority of the Speaker. I believe strongly that this is the right thing to do for committees. I also deplore, regretfully, that the committee this morning exceeded its authority by permitting television cameras to televise its proceedings. In the absence of formal authority the committee members exceeded their authority, and it could be that the broadcasters themselves could be held in contempt of this House because there is no disposition that protects them, as far as parliamentary immunity is concerned or as far as the normal law of defamation is concerned. In other words, a broadcaster who utilized the image and sound recorded in that committee this morning could be held responsible under the normal laws of defamation and could possibly be held in contempt of the House because there is no provision for that recording.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that the privileges of all Members of the House this morning were possibly somewhat misused. I would like you to rule as soon as possible on how we can resolve the situation by inviting the Government, maybe all House Leaders—

Mr. Fennell: And the Whips.

Mr. Gauthier: And the Whips—I appreciate the comment of the Government Whip—to sit down and conclude how we can resolve this problem once and for all.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I wish to respond briefly to my hon. colleague's point. First, I would suggest with respect that his point is not a question of privilege because my hon. friend was not personally involved in

the committee meeting in question. On a previous occasion my friend made an excellent argument on the basis of a question of privilege because he was at the particular committee meeting at which it was suggested the meeting be televised. On this occasion, my hon. friend was not at the meeting. I think that the matter should be treated as a point of order, which I think is a very good point of order.

I have reviewed *Hansard* from the previous occasion in which my hon. friend made the point on page 822 that no committee chairman has the authority to allow televising or broadcasting of committee hearings. I agree 100 per cent with my colleague. I would take it one step further. First, however, I want to join with him in commenting on the content of the committee hearings.

There is absolutely no question that every Canadian—we were all here yesterday when Coretta King was introduced to the House—is well aware of the magnificent contribution which her husband made to the history of this continent and the efforts that she is making of her own accord. We are appreciative of her visiting Canada and taking the time to meet with Hon. Members of the House of Commons. However, there are some things that no committee is empowered to do, even upon consent. I suggest, as my hon. friend suggested, that the House Leaders and the Board of Internal Economy be seized of the matter. That is where it belongs.

• (1520)

Considerations are ongoing, and it was unfortunate and inappropriate that the hearings this morning were televised. We all appreciate the spirit of the occasion, but there are some things one cannot do, even with consent, when the spirit moves one.

I suggest that Mr. Speaker should consider this to be a very serious point of order. Under the circumstances, as my friend suggested, until some rulings upon which we can all agree are brought forward in the House, there should be no question at any time that committee hearings be televised.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the matter before us for a moment, as I was there this morning and witnessed what happened.

What is apparent to everyone is that there was a lot of confusion and interest because the witness was one with very high profile, there was a huge crowd, and all sorts of things can happen. I think what the House wants to understand—and certain committee chairmen would want to hear it expressed—is that this is not a precedent. What happened this morning was a very unique circumstance. It is important that the Board of Internal Economy deal with it. I think it is something the House wants to see decided clearly and in a direction which we as chairmen can live up to.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to a somewhat dubious question of privilege and perhaps more likely a point