

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 26, 1987

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

APPLICATION OF STANDING ORDER 92(2)

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Question of Privilege of which I gave you notice earlier this morning.

Yesterday the chairman of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration called a meeting of the committee to plan the future business of the committee and to deal with recommendations of the steering committee, that is, the subcommittee on agenda and procedure, that the committee meet on Monday, June 29, to examine the policy of the Unemployment Insurance Commission to force unemployment insurance beneficiaries to take work as strike breakers, and also to deal with the John Quigley affair.

Rather than deal with the proposals of the steering committee, the majority on the committee forced the committee, first, to meet *in camera*, and then passed a resolution that the committee would not meet until September 14.

As a result of that action taken by the Government majority, myself and three other members on the committee made a demand under Standing Order 92(2) that the committee meet to deal with the Unemployment Insurance Commission policy with respect to strike breakers. This demand was made by myself, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) and the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi).

As of this morning we have not yet had a reply from the chairman of the standing committee with respect to our demand and we need 48 hours notice in order for such a meeting to take place. We maintain that the chairman of the standing committee has no discretion in this matter to delay or refuse our request, nor can the majority on the committee do so.

The purpose of Standing Order 92(2) was to ensure the calling of a meeting by a minority on standing committees of this House. We strongly believe that this action taken by the Conservative majority on the committee, and the chairman, to

refuse a meeting under Standing Order 92(2), is a violation of our privileges and, in particular, a violation of the privileges of all Members in opposition Parties in this Parliament. This is particularly so in a Parliament such as this where the Government has an overwhelming majority.

If Standing Order 92(2) is to have any meaning whatsoever, it is that four Members of a committee can force that committee to meet when there is an important issue on which it must meet. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that our privileges, the minority Members of this Parliament, the Opposition, are being violated by the action of the majority on the committee by the refusal to act on our demand under Standing Order 92(2) to have a meeting to deal with this important matter.

If you find, Mr. Speaker, that we have a *prima facie* case of privilege, I will make the appropriate motion to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer you directly to Citation 76 of Beauchesne's, Fifth Edition:

Breaches of privilege in committee may be dealt with only by the House itself on report from the committee.

Second, I would submit that the committee majority has decided not to sit during the summer as has, I believe, almost every other committee of this House, so that puts them in the majority rather than in the minority.

Third, the four Members of the Opposition who wish to meet Monday, only for their own purposes, have given notice under Standing Order 92(2), which they are entitled to do. But my friend presupposes that the chairman will not call that meeting. This is only the first day of the 10 day period. My goodness, if we are going to have a Question of Privilege, surely it must come at the end of the 10 day period, not on the very first day.

There is no one in breach of Standing Order 92(2) until the expiration of the 10 days. I do not think I need to say anymore than that.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) could wait and I will hear the Hon. Member for Kamloops Shuswap (Mr. Riis) and then I will hear the Hon. Member again.