

No. 284

JOURNALS

OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OF CANADA

OTTAWA, FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 1976

11.00 o'clock a.m.

PRAYERS

Ordered,—That at 4.00 o'clock p.m., this day, the House revert to "Routine Proceedings".

RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: I gave some indication yesterday of an intention to finalize today a question of privilege of some importance which was raised a few days ago by the honourable Member for Athabasca (Mr. Yewchuk). It was contributed to by several honourable Members, very significantly by the honourable Member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. Holmes), and in turn, because it involved certain allegations respecting remarks by the honourable Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt).

The question of privilege raises two very serious problems, the first having to do with the conduct of affairs in our standing committees. I want to make it clear that while I have given several indications of my reluctance to alter the practice of the Chair of staying away from reviewing decisions of any sort of the standing committees except within the proper proceedings of the House, I do want to make it clear that it is perfectly understood that questions of privilege, if they do in fact exist, are not confined to incidents which take place in the Chamber.

Obviously, questions of privilege can arise from events which take place outside the Chamber, and therefore, it

follows, in the standing committees. There is no question about that. If, in fact, a matter does give rise to a question of privilege within our precedents and practices, whether that takes place outside the Chamber, and perhaps in a standing committee, would in no way disqualify it. However, the situation which is before us, seems to me, involves not only a disagreement on substance, but perhaps also a disagreement on procedure. It may involve a question of order in the committee. I say that it may, but indeed, all these are questions which are within the competence of the standing committee to deal with, and in fact the standing committee dealt with it in one way or another. However, that was resolved in the standing committee, it seems to me that it did involve questions of order, procedure or substance in the committee, and ought not to be a part of the concern of the Chair.

I think the reasoning for that is obvious. When it was seen that there was serious disagreement about the interpretation which ought to have been put on words, events, the manner in which they took place and their intentions, the House has also been very careful in the past to avoid the immense difficulties which would obviously arise if the House was to constitute itself into one standing committee for the purpose of investigating proceedings which have taken place in another standing committee. Therefore, I would reject—except under the clearly established