

Honour said at the outset that that is not the issue which is troubling you.

● (1550)

In respect of the proposition put forward by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), I certainly would have no objection to sitting down with the government House leader to see whether something acceptable could be worked out in the way of terms of reference to that committee in the spirit suggested by the hon. member for Peace River. I tried to make that clear in my speech yesterday, as I tried equally today to make it clear that in terms of broadcasting the procedures of the House, the position of this party, as well as my own personal position, is as has been expressed by the hon. member for Peace River. If something can be done in that respect, I would be the first to agree with the proposal; I think it is constructive.

All of us in the House want this matter to proceed in a proper and orderly way. I must confess to you, Mr. Speaker—and I think it is proper that I make my confession here—that I am very much concerned about the fact that Your Honour will be the chairman of the committee proposed by the government to deal with the issue. This has been one of my concerns, though I have not said it before, and that is why I am confessing it here. I am concerned about the fact that you will find yourself as chairman, firstly from your personal point of view, certainly, but as well from the point of view of the institution of the Chair as it has developed in this House. I can see the possibility of dangers for the Chair, and I do not think Mr. Speaker should be involved in that way.

There is another aspect of concern. If the hon. member for Peace River is correct in terms of what he is urging in the context of his speech, that the committee examine, then the committee Your Honour would chair under the motion as originally drafted, as opposed to the committee I suggested should be constituted, namely, the committee on procedure and organization, might very well refer the question of privilege, immunities and rights to another committee chaired by you, namely, the committee in which the hon. member for Peace River is involved. All in all, I think this is not the most constructive way of proceeding, notwithstanding the fact that I believe we should proceed in the way suggested and approved of in principle; that is, by way of a committee of the House with the responsibility of dealing with the important matters it ought to consider in terms of the implementation that is set forth and agreed to, as I tried to make clear in the first part of my motion.

In terms of the merit of the questions that you have put to me today, Mr. Speaker, I should like to advance one further proposition, and that is a proposition well known to both of us. In a parliamentary sense, at least, it is the proposition that I would call, for want of a better phrase, that of reasonable doubt. This is a proposition that applies to drafting generally. If there is or might be, some doubt as to the purport of an amendment, then that doubt ought to be resolved in favour of validity. Naturally, I would hope Your Honour would not be

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driven to that point, but I would respectfully remind you, without repeating it, of the proposition I put first.

I want to close by saying that my amendment was advanced very seriously, out of a very serious concern for this institution. It was advanced in the spirit of the statements I made in my speech yesterday on the principles involved in broadcasting the proceedings of this House. As I said in my speech, I find great difficulty, and others may not, in suggesting to the people of Canada that they do not have the right to see what goes on in their own parliament. That is the spirit in which the motion was advanced, and that is the spirit in which I am prepared to accept the suggestion put to me by my learned predecessor. I would be delighted to meet with the government House leader to see if we can resolve this matter.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the importance of the comments made by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), and the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) on the irregularity of this amendment. I believe that as the argument unfolded in the debate it became clear that in a sense the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton was presenting a proposition different to the one embodied in the main motion.

I support the argument by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) when he suggested that acceptance of the irregularity of the amendment would place the House in an inconsistent position in dealing with the motion, because if the amendment were adopted it would be inconsistent with itself. The motion provides for a particular framework, and the motion must be looked at as a whole. It calls for the acceptance by the House of radio and television broadcasting of its proceedings and the proceedings of committees in accordance with principles similar to those that govern the printed record. Part of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton contradicts that particular proposal because he talks about special or experimental broadcasting.

We have deliberately sought this committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Speaker as a very important element in the framework because of the authority and prestige the office holds, and because this is a committee of implementation and not of study and report. In a sense, that is the framework we have put forward. As I understand the proposition put forward by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, it is entirely different: it is a different proposition calculated to do different things.

I am not arguing against the desirability of new proposals being advanced, or suggesting that this is the only way in which this can be done. However, looking at it from a procedural point of view, I am persuaded that there is here a new proposition and that the application of Beauchesne's citation 202(15) goes directly to this point. Beauchesne refers to an amendment ruled out of order, and indicates that the Speaker has ruled that an amendment disapproving the principle of the main motion is out of order. Surely the amendment is designed to disapprove the basic framework that we have proposed.