

Point of Order—Mr. Beatty

Notwithstanding that opinion which was expressed, I want to remind the members that the matter of deciding if broadcasting is to take place lies with all sorts of people, but not with me. I cannot decide whether the proceedings will be broadcast. I might express an opinion on how that can happen. If a decision is taken in respect of that, in the committee or in the House, there are proceedings to allow that to happen. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) referred to how these things can happen. Therefore, the decision will not be made by me. I want to make it quite clear that that is not my responsibility.

With regard to the interpretation the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) put on the third paragraph in my letter, he said that I had affirmed that the committees are without authority to broadcast their proceedings. Later on in the debate the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) read that paragraph in its entirety. I just want to warn the hon. member for Provencher that he should not take it to mean that these committees have definitely not been endowed with authority to take those decisions. "To date", in this Parliament, "no further action has been taken" with regard to "the broadcasting of the proceedings of committees. Failing such a decision of the House, the committees are without authority to broadcast their proceedings." They were thus not consciously deprived of that authority. The matter, and I will check into the record, simply has not been resolved.

The intention might have been to give those committees that authority. I will have to refer back, and this is precisely what I want to do, to the minutes and the resolution, and look in greater detail at the context in which my opinion was expressed. I repeat, I will do my best to be consistent with the opinion I expressed and to ascertain whether that opinion is in reference to certain circumstances which cannot be paralleled with the circumstances that we are now discussing. I will take this matter which has been raised as a question of privilege, under advisement.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. BEATTY—INTERIM REPORTS BY SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Could we also have an explicit ruling from you as to whether the committee is empowered to issue interim reports to the House or whether that will result in the termination of the life of the committee, as suggested by the government House leader this afternoon? This is critical to the whole conduct of the committee's activities.

Madam Speaker: That was not raised in the question of privilege. I will base my ruling on what was raised in the House in the course of the exchanges on the question of privilege.

Mr. Beatty: Could I get some clarification from you, Madam Speaker. I apologize, Madam Speaker, I am genuinely confused. What I would like is to request from you at this time a ruling as to whether the committee on the constitution has the authority to issue interim reports, or whether the issuing of a report to both Houses would result in the termination of the committee under the terms of reference granted to the committee.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member has asked me to interpret the order of reference of that committee. It is not for me to interpret it.

Mr. Beatty: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Victoria-Madawaska (Mr. Corbin) quoted Beauchesne. Also, the government House leader this afternoon read from the French version of Beauchesne, which I do not have before me, in support of an argument that any issuance of an interim report by the committee would result in the termination of the life of that committee. That quotation was read into the record by the government House leader. It leaves the House in a very difficult situation.

An explicit assurance was given in the Senate by the government House leader in the Senate that interim reports would be legal and proper. In the House of Commons this afternoon his counterpart, the government House leader here, indicated his firm belief, quoting Beauchesne, that the issuance of any report by that committee would lead to the termination of that committee.

What we need from you, Madam Speaker, is a judgment on the basis of Beauchesne, citation 591, as to whether an interim report by that committee would lead to the termination of that committee.

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, it is getting late and I do not intend to go on at length. I shall simply refer you to the text of the motion passed by the House and the citations from Beauchesne mentioned by my learned colleague. I believe that you will find there all that you need to make a ruling.

[English]

Madam Speaker: I will not render a decision. I will only tell the hon. member that I will look at that problem if and when it arises, but not at the present time.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, perhaps the government House leader would simplify matters if he would tell us whether it was his intention and the intention of the government in drafting that reference to preclude and prevent the special joint committee from making interim reports.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make me say something that probably did not cross my mind. All that I have said is that the resolution or motion