
Thursday, May 6, 2004.

1 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

Mr. Speaker made the following statement to the House:

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Before beginning today's deliberations, honourable members, I want to correct a comment that I made and that was reported in *The Daily Gleaner* on May 6, 2004, where it is reported that "House Speaker Bev Harrison, who chairs the committee, said Graham never told the committee he was resigning because he felt uncomfortable about the deliberations." That is the quote.

As honourable members are aware, the meetings of the Legislative Administration Committee are held in camera; therefore, as chair of the committee, I am not in a position to divulge any statements made by a committee member during in camera deliberations. Therefore, any statements that are purported to have been made by me, and have been reported in the media, are incorrect insofar as they relate to the proceedings of the committee.

What I can advise this House is that as chair of the Legislative Administration Committee, I meant to say that the Leader of the Opposition did not communicate to me personally, as chair, prior to the meeting, the reason for his resigning from the committee, as statements made directly to the committee by any member are confidential.

Hon. D. Graham announced that following Private Members' Motions, it was the intention of the government that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to resume consideration of the estimates of the Department of Education.

Pursuant to Notice of Motion 5, Mr. S. Graham moved, seconded by Mr. MacIntyre:

WHEREAS the ceiling levels for transfers for coverage of the cost of prescription drugs from the provincial Prescription Drug Program for seniors to the Blue Cross plan for seniors were established in 1992 to be \$17 198 for a single senior and \$26 955 for married seniors and have remained at that level;

AND WHEREAS inflation over the years reduces the purchasing power of seniors' earnings;

AND WHEREAS the government has recognized this in its provincial income tax legislation with a provision to prevent "bracket creep";

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly ask the government to examine the feasibility of making an adjustment to this ceiling in the coming year to reflect the above index of inflation in the intervening years;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly ask the government to consider adopting a policy that would automatically adjust the ceilings for the provincial Prescription Drug Program based on an appropriate index of inflation to prevent bracket creep from imposing hardship on seniors.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

And after some time, due to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker, Mr. C. LeBlanc, the Deputy Speaker, took the chair as Acting Speaker.

And after some further time, Mr. Lamrock rose on a question of privilege concerning the Speaker of the House and gave notice of his intention, pursuant to *Standing Rule 9(2)*, to move the following motion, seconded by Mr. McGinley:

THAT the member for Hampton-Belleisle, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, be suspended from the position of Speaker of this House until such time as the Standing Committee on Privileges has investigated the allegations that the Speaker has, by acting in a manner inconsistent with the neutrality of his office, breached the privileges of the House.

Mr. C. LeBlanc, the Deputy Speaker informed the House that the matter would be dealt with two hours hence.

Debate resumed on Motion 5 and after some time, Mr. Holder, the Deputy Speaker, took the chair as Acting Speaker.

And the debate being ended, and the question being put, Motion 5 was negatived.

The House, according to Order, resolved itself into a Committee of Supply with Mr. C. LeBlanc in the chair.

At 4.27 o'clock p.m. the Chairman declared a recess and left the chair.

4.29 o'clock p.m.

The Committee resumed with Mr. Holder in the chair.

And after some time, due to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker, Mr. C. LeBlanc, the Deputy Speaker, resumed the chair as Acting Speaker, and Mr. Holder, the Chairman, after requesting that Mr. Deputy Speaker revert to Presentations of Committee Reports, reported that the Committee had had under consideration the matters referred to them, had made some progress therein, and asked leave to sit again.

Pursuant to Standing Rule 78.1, Mr. Deputy Speaker then put the question on the motion deemed to be before the House, that the report be concurred in, and it was resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Deputy Speaker delivered the following ruling with respect to the Question of Privilege raised earlier in the sitting by the Member for Fredericton Fort-Nashwaak:

STATEMENT BY DEPUTY SPEAKER

Earlier in the sitting, the Member for Fredericton Fort-Nashwaak stood to give notice of his intention to raise a question of privilege concerning the Speaker of this House.

Honourable Members, the parliamentary authorities are clear—the actions of the Speaker are not to be criticized in debate, or by any other means, except by way of substantive motion.

This is confirmed at pages 332-333 of *Erskine May*, 22nd Edition, pages 106-108 of *La Procédure Parlementaire du Québec, 2^e édition*, and at page 266 of *Marleau and Monpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

It is not in order to raise questions concerning the Speaker by means of raising a question of privilege.

Indeed, remarks directed towards the Speaker in this way may themselves be seen as constituting an attack on the authority and impartiality of the Chair and are strictly out of order.

Honourable Members, the Speaker made a statement to the House at the beginning of this sitting day concerning and clarifying his remarks to the press. As I have stated, it is not now in order to raise this matter as a question of privilege and accordingly I will not allow it to go forward.

The House, according to Order, resolved itself into a Committee of Supply with Mr. Holder in the chair.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker resumed the chair and Mr. Holder, the Chairman, after requesting that Mr. Speaker revert to Presentations of Committee Reports, reported that the Committee had had under consideration the matters referred to them, had made some progress therein, and asked leave to sit again.

Pursuant to Standing Rule 78.1, Mr. Speaker then put the question on the motion deemed to be before the House, that the report be concurred in, and it was resolved in the affirmative.

And then 6 o'clock p.m. the House adjourned.