

Privilege—Mr. McKnight

Mr. McKnight: I am sure that is not one of your assistants that I hear, Madam Speaker.

My question of privilege is that Members must know whether their franks are being used, because our franks are important. If a frank has fallen into the wrong hands or used without a Member's knowledge, it is important that all Members of Parliament are made aware of this. Letters that do not pertain to federal Government business or do not pertain to matters concerning a Member's own constituency may be sent out and people will assume that the frank was used with the Member's knowledge and, therefore, his endorsement of whatever information may be contained in those letters.

I raise this question of privilege because I feel that you, Madam Speaker, as the first Commoner of the House, have the right and will to protect the use of our franks. I have brought this to the attention of the Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake and, through raising this question of privilege, I am asking that Members be made aware of the situation and be sure that their franks are used only with their knowledge, since it may not have been used with the knowledge of the Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member must be fair. He does not know whether the frank has been used with the knowledge of another Hon. Member. He does not know whether the Hon. Member used it himself. It is not a very precise exposition of a complaint of a problem and I cannot accept it as such.

Furthermore, with respect to the matter of the use of a frank, if the Hon. Member has a complaint, especially of the type he is now discussing, I think he could discuss it with the Hon. Member. As Hon. Members know, the use of the frank is a matter that is usually discussed among the Members of the Committee on Management and Members' Services if there is a particular problem arising from the use of the frank. The Speaker does not interfere to tell Hon. Members in what instances they may use their frank or may not use their frank. This is up to the Hon. Member to determine. He does it within his own conception of what is or is not proper. If something improper arises, Hon. Members usually discuss it in the Committee.

I cannot hear the Hon. Member further. He has already spoken for quite a while on this subject and has not made clear that it is a question of privilege. I have gone to the trouble of explaining to him where he can get redress on this particular matter. I would urge him to do just that.

I will deal with the questions of privilege in the order they have been received. The Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker).

Mr. Thacker: Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Nystrom: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In all fairness, the name of the Hon. Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake (Mr. Anguish) was dragged before the House. As you said, Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member making the charge spoke for quite a while. We have a tradition

in the House of giving the Member at least a few minutes to reply to the charges that are being made. I maintain that that Member should have that right. I see the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydsminster (Mr. McKnight) nodding his head.

Madam Speaker: I do not say that the Hon. Member would not have the right to reply, but I have already ruled on the matter, which is not a question of privilege, in any event. If the Hon. Member wishes to reply I may hear him later; but the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills rose before him and that is why I recognized him.

Mr. Thacker: Madam Speaker, in view of the fact that the matter was raised by the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydsminster (Mr. McKnight) and that the Member for The Battlefords-Meadow Lake (Mr. Anguish) wishes to respond, I would be delighted to stand down for a couple of minutes to allow him to respond. I do not want the Hon. Member to stand again on a point of order and interrupt a proper question of privilege which affects every Member of the House. I believe you will find that all Members have the same problem I have with respect to Private Bills. It truly is a question of privilege which must be dealt with.

Madam Speaker: There is some difficulty. I have already ruled on this particular question. I could perhaps accept what the Hon. Member has to say on a point of order but he should not comment on the ruling. If he wants to give an explanation, I will hear him on a point of order.

Mr. Anguish: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the correspondence to which the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydsminster (Mr. McKnight) referred arose from a concern over a bill that was presented in the provincial legislature of Saskatchewan. It concerned Bill 46, an Act to abolish the land bank. In the wisdom of the previous Government, it saw fit to create the Saskatchewan land bank and the Saskatchewan Land Bank Commission as a means to get young farmers on the land. In the wisdom of the new Government which just came into power in Saskatchewan, it has seen fit to abolish the land bank by introducing Bill 46.

The Hon. Member does raise a very important matter. The letter which he has brought into question was sent out under the signature of a Chris Mewhort, who is a land bank tenant and represented the Saskatchewan Land Bank Tenants Association.

I believe that when a Member's frank is used it must be done in a way that upholds the honour of this institution. This is not accomplished if Members use their privilege as Members of Parliament, especially with regard to franking of correspondence, to send correspondence which has a political leaning or nature to it.

I submit that in the case of this letter that was sent out by the Saskatchewan Land Bank Tenants Association, there was no political motivation on my part. There were some 2,600 land bank tenants in Saskatchewan. Many of those are card-carrying members of the Progressive Conservative Party, many