

Non-Confidence in Deputy Speaker

knew at that time that he could not get the unanimous consent of the house. He knew that there were members who would object.

Moreover, the Prime Minister acted in such a way that no member of this house could exercise his rights. He asked for permission to introduce his motion, he put it forward and then continued with his comments without giving anybody a chance to use his privileges.

In order to be polite, we let the Prime Minister put forward his motion, but he did not give anyone the chance to say whether or not he objected. He knew that some members of our group were opposed to it, but despite all that, despite the fact that he knew since early in the afternoon that there was opposition, he came back with his motion and did not give anybody a chance to put forth his objections.

In my opinion, the Prime Minister knew what would happen. He acted in such a way that the rights of hon. members be not recognized and that they could have no opportunity to exercise their privileges in the house. I believe that he should be the first to blame in all this.

Mr. Speaker, others should also be blamed. All the members who were in the house that evening, and especially those who are always particularly aware of the rules, those who protest against the smallest breach of the rules, when that serves their purpose or when such intervention can favour their cause. But, as this did not favour their cause, they did not do it that evening.

If the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre had intended to raise an objection, he would have raised it, but that evening he did not, he remained in his seat and did not say a word. But he was the first on his feet to give advice to the Prime Minister on procedure and application of standing orders, especially regarding the rule for exemption from obtaining unanimous consent of the house to carry on the debate. But when the rights of members were ignored, the member for Winnipeg North Centre did not rise, nor did the leader of the official opposition, who has always been a great upholder of parliamentary procedure in the house. This also applies to the member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Churchill) and the member for Edmonton West or East, I forget now, the former speaker of the house (Mr. Lambert), and to all the others who are so sensitive about standing orders. That evening, however, none of them stood up, they all remained seated, without saying a word. I think they are partly to blame because of the silence they have observed.

[Mr. Gregoire.]

[Text]

Mr. Lambert: On a question of personal privilege, Mr. Speaker, I should like to draw the attention of the hon. member and the house to the fact that I was not in the city of Ottawa on Friday and could not be present at that time.

[Translation]

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Speaker, I beg the hon. member for Edmonton West's pardon, but on the other hand, I should thank him because he gave hon. members an opportunity to notice that between the moment he rose to put his question of privilege, and the moment you recognized him, seven or eight seconds elapsed, which gives point to my argument of a while ago.

Mr. Lambert: I do not speak as fast as you.

Mr. Gregoire: Mr. Speaker, last Friday night, the hon. members who were in the house, not only the ones I identified a while ago, but also the others, created for themselves a special atmosphere and in order to achieve their purpose, they preferred to turn a deaf ear and keep silent on the breaking of the rules which happened that evening.

Another offender was the Deputy Speaker whose mission is to be non-partisan and respectful of the rights of hon. members, whether they be members of the opposition, of any group, or of the government. He is the guardian and the defender of the rules of the house. He should have been above the developments of the urgency resolution and see to it that the rights and privileges of hon. members be respected, which was not done.

That omission is all the more serious that in spite of our representations, the Deputy Speaker transgressed his mandate and scorned the nobility of his office.

It is true that we might have another party in power tomorrow, or another one the next day, but if we put up with such a situation, we should be ashamed of ourselves, because we will stand in danger of a degradation of the rights and privileges of hon. members and also of the standing orders of the house.

Mr. Speaker, we all have the responsibility to hold very high the nobility and the dignity of the office of the Speaker. And that omission is even more serious for us, because the two years we were here, was the first time we witnessed such a situation.

I always considered and I still consider the Deputy Speaker, the hon. member for Stornont, to be a gentleman, an amiable and respectable person—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.