

Privilege

Members. The Minister took this opportunity to release the information directly to the media, without inviting or notifying Members.

As a Member of this House with specific duties as the Opposition spokesman for fisheries, I feel that my rights have been breached and that my role as the Official Opposition critic has been diminished. Especially, Mr. Speaker, since in this document, the Minister seems to paint a picture that is far more optimistic than the gloomy situation in our Atlantic fisheries. We know there is a serious problem with our northern cod. Quotas have been cut, plants have had to close, the herring fisheries are in serious trouble, and lobster, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order! I am reluctant to interrupt the Hon. Member. I realize he may wish to formulate a complaint, but I must say, in response to his statement, that this does not constitute a question of privilege. However, if the Hon. Minister wishes to respond, he may do so.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to respond to the concerns raised in the form of a question of privilege by my hon. colleague for Beauséjour.

I am aware of a collection of information, I assume to be public information, which my Deputy Minister and officials have put together, summarizing the current economic performance, and the landings, the record of the fishery of recent years. I understand that that document has been used for the briefing of various members of the media, among others.

That document has not been made available to members of Parliament. I believe it to be based on public information. I would be most happy to make it available to all members of Parliament should that be the wish of the hon. member.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in no way has the privilege of members been breached in this manner.

Mr. Speaker: First, other members may wish to rise. There is no particular need to do that because this is not a question of privilege. The hon. member for Beauséjour has directed a complaint to the Chair. I am sure that given the response by the Minister, perhaps a discussion

would ensure that the complaint would not have to be brought again.

Hon. members will realize that a question of privilege is not the place to enter into a debate, no matter how legitimate or how difficult the issue is.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, you will remember that since last Friday, we have changed the Standing Orders somewhat with respect to committees of the House. As you know, the Standing Committees of the House have all been reconstituted and are now in a new session, and to avoid having elections in all the committees, the House decided not to follow the customary procedure in the Standing Orders according to which each committee elects its chairman, vice-chairman and so forth.

Today, it seems we have a few problems as a result of the decision we made here on Friday, since the committee clerks will not accept the lists of replacements for members of the various House committees, which may cause certain problems when we want to be replaced or have to be in two locations at the same time. Mr. Speaker, to deal with this situation and avoid any problems as a result of the fact that members have not had time since this morning to submit their lists of replacements, I wish to move, having consulted with the Government and the New Democratic Party, the following motion which reads as follows:

That the list of replacements for members of Standing Committees, in effect on October 5, 1989, in other words, last Thursday, remain in effect, where appropriate, until October 17, 1989.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier is clearly putting a motion which would require consent of the House. There seems to be some indication that he has that consent. Is it agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: When the House rose at one o'clock, the hon. member for Nickel Belt had the floor.