

has a very valid point in this question of privilege. If we were somewhere else we might describe this as a matter of contempt, because it does boil down to a contempt of this House. It is on this ground that I want to describe these three sets of coincidences.

There is in addition a fourth argument which I should like to touch upon briefly. It really strains my ability to accept the arguments advanced by the other side. I get the feeling when you take these three sets of circumstances together that there might be a fourth question, so to speak, which strains even further the credibility of the argument put forward. This may convince Your Honour that the case has been well founded.

The first set of coincidences relates to the dates. The order in council, PC 1978-3243, is dated October 26. The bill was introduced on November 2, about a week later. The order in council was gazetted a week later on November 8. Then the bill was adopted and referred to the committee. I believe the date of its reference was December 5. Those four dates, October 26, November 2, November 8 and December 5, with a debate in between, suggest there is a certain amount of haste on the part of the government.

The second circumstance or coincidence, and it would strain the imagination if it were not a coincidence, is that what we are doing here is adding a new paragraph after paragraph (g) namely, paragraph (h). That paragraph makes reference to the 20 hours a week and the less than 30 per cent of maximum weekly insurable earnings. They were not referred to in the previous section. There also appears a reference to the 20 hours and the 30 per cent of the maximum weekly insurable earnings in the regulations. We must keep in mind that these regulations were published before the bill was introduced. They were approved in cabinet before the bill was presented to the House. It was presented to the House on November 2 and gazetted with these same terms on November 8. That is the second set of circumstances.

Having regard to the third set of circumstances, I noted with absolute amazement the number of times this committee met. It meets four times on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It met again this morning. There are very few committees that meet ten times in a week. I can account for nine of its meetings and there may have been another on Monday morning, which would make ten committee meetings in a week. What is the reason for all this urgency? We knew on December 8 through the order in council that the new regulations come into effect on the first day of next year. The bill, after being considered by the committee, will come back to the House for report stage and debate. Obviously the government wants to get this bill through the House by the end of this month in order to justify the date set out in the *Canada Gazette* regarding the regulations, and in order to justify or legitimize, so to speak, the order in council which was gazetted on November 8.

The fourth matter which is of a somewhat different nature, and perhaps not as grave as this pre-emption of the rights of parliament, relates to a press release. I came to Ottawa with the firm belief that this parliament had some meaningful role to play in legislation that would have a bearing on the lives of

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the Canadian people. When I found this sort of thing could be done through order in council rather than by legislation I became greatly disillusioned. I am very disillusioned by the performance of a government which acts in this way.

The date of this press release which I happened to come across the other day does not matter very much, but it is November 30. It was issued by the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc). It is to be noted that at the top left hand corner the department is noted as "Fisheries and Environment". The press release refers to fisheries and oceans, assistant deputy ministers appointed. The first sentence in the text is interesting. It states in part that "A major re-structuring of the emerging fisheries and oceans department" will come into effect on a certain date.

I rose to my feet during the question period, as did a lot of other people, to ask the minister if he was changing the name of his department. This government changes things by gazet-ting them before the existence of substantiating legislation. This government changes things by press release before there is any legislation, as in this case, changing the name of the department to the "Department of Fisheries and Oceans". To my way of thinking, this develops a brand new theory of legislative process. I can only describe it as legislation required to legitimize regulation. I am sure even Laski did not produce such a theory of government. The only place I know of where legislation follows the putting into place of regulation is one of the supreme councils of the people's democratic republic. I suggest this is the direction we are going.

Mr. Speaker: As I indicated earlier, I will give this matter careful consideration over the weekend.

Before moving to orders of the day, there are two other questions of privilege of which I have received notice. The first is raised by the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte).

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to rise on this question of privilege which concerns me personally and highly interests the 70,000 residents of the Champlain riding who feel rejected because their own member is helpless under the policy enforced by the Chair when it comes to my right to speak during general debates or during question period or on motions. Allow me to point out the essential issue which has given rise to a real question of privilege.

First, you will admit with me that this assembly is made up of 264 members enjoying equal rights and privileges. If some are ready to abdicate their own independence and freedom for the sake of a strict party line, allow me to do differently. During some ten years while I sat as a member of the Social Credit Party of Canada, I always kept my freedom of action. It is indeed the lack of democratic freedom and the irresponsibility of that party which have led me to resign from its ranks. I am not responsible to anyone except to the electors of the