

Point of Order—Mr. Lewis

—much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking; sometimes upon the person to whom the words are addressed, as, whether he is a public officer, or a private Member not in office, or whether the words are meant to be applied to his public conduct, or to his private character; and sometimes upon the degree of provocation, which the Member speaking had received from the person he alludes to; and all these considerations must be attended to at the moment, as they are infinitely various and cannot possibly be foreseen in such a manner that precise rules can be adopted with respect to them.

Decorum in this House, Mr. Speaker, is the responsibility of all of us. The first check on decorum is the Member himself or herself and how he or she regards this institution and what respect he or she has for it. That is the first check on decorum.

Mr. Marchi: Respect the opposition.

Mr. Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary is making an argument. I am sure that all Hon. Members would want to give him the courtesy of completing the argument without interruption. The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, second, failing the responsibility of the Member himself or herself, decorum is the responsibility of the officers of that particular caucus. Each of us has a responsibility to check the decorum of the House. I can tell you without imputing any motives to the Hon. Member that we find no opposition Members' remarks as offensive as the remarks and the conduct of the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie. I say that to Members of the opposition sitting here and I say it to those colleagues who are not here. We find no conduct of any Member of the opposition as offensive as the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie.

Lastly, decorum in the House, if it breaks down at the Member's level, if it breaks down at the caucus officers level, is the responsibility of yourself, Sir.

I suggest that today there was a good-natured exchange between the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie). It was a good-natured exchange. Each Member went at one another and I think there was a lessening of tension, tension precipitated by the Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie.

An Hon. Member: You are ragging the puck.

Mr. Lewis: I am closing now. These remarks were drafted. I am not ragging the puck on anybody.

Mr. Rossi: On opposition day, are you obliged to listen to the opposition?

Mr. Lewis: I say that the atmosphere in this House is poisoned when that kind of conduct is allowed to continue, Mr. Speaker. I say the relationships between the Parties are poisoned when that kind of conduct is allowed to continue; I say to you that Parliament is poisoned when that kind of conduct is allowed to continue.

This is a place for healthy debate. We are trying to build a country. We do not do it by slandering the reputations of other Members, our Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, leaders of the opposition Parties or anybody. We do it by healthy debate.

It is time that the conduct of this particular Member was examined in detail, that we get back to healthy debate in this place and get rid of slander and slandering reputations.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I want to be very brief. Unlike the Hon. Member I, and I think the country, want to hear the debate on the motion set down by the Liberal Party today with respect to conditions in Alberta. I want to say to the Hon. Member that it is a strange new proposition to suggest to the Speaker that the tone of voice used in debate can be found so offensive by an Hon. Member, can frighten or upset an Hon. Member, that the tone of voice is contrary to the privileges of the House. I am surprised that Members of the Conservative Party are so thin skinned. I do not know what it is that has so disturbed them that if an Hon. Member says: "if you have the courage" in a particular tone of voice it should send the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary into such paroxysms of outrage and concern.

As you yourself said, Mr. Speaker, I think in your first words as Speaker in this House, this is a place for strong and vigorous debate and for strong feelings. I am paraphrasing my recollection of your words, Sir. It would certainly be a very great and serious change in the customs and traditions of this House if it were proper grounds for an acceptable question of privilege to be found on the suggestion that there is something wrong with the tone of voice in which an Hon. Member expressed a point of view. I realize that the Parliamentary Secretary and his colleagues have a lot at the present time to be sensitive and concerned about. I submit, with the utmost respect, that to try to say that the tone of voice in which remarks are made is a fit subject for a ruling, that the words thereby become unparliamentary, is to extend the concept of unparliamentary language far beyond what has been the case in this House or other parliamentary institutions. I cannot understand how the Parliamentary Secretary could in any way be upset about another Hon. Member, in this case the Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) putting into his question the interjection "if you have the courage". All you have to do, Mr. Speaker, is to look at Beauséjour and see the words that have been ruled parliamentary: dishonest, false, coward, pig, obscene, untrue.

● (1600)

Mr. Speaker: I hope that in the reading of all those words there will be no encouragement to use any of them.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Thank you for your admonition, Mr. Speaker. I have used them in the abstract, quoting from Beauséjour, whatever temptation I may have to apply them in discussions in this House from time to time.

The point I am trying to make is that surely the word "courage" used in the way the Hon. Member did could not possibly be considered unparliamentary if one compares it with the words actually found to be parliamentary.

I conclude by saying it is very strange for the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to get up and make his point today and end