

Privilege

There is a reference in one article—that came out of the paper yesterday about the government having a majority on the committee. The government does not. People who are not supporters of the government represent four votes on the committee and supporters of the government represent three.

The fact is that the committee was struck with eight members, five representing the government, two from the Official Opposition, and one from the New Democratic Party. Because one of the members on the committee now defected from the government ranks and now sits as an independent, the current membership list shows that four members of the committee are Conservative caucus members. Four of the eight may not be a majority, in the Whip's eyes, but it certainly is no minority. I would suggest that in fact the government still controls five seats on that committee and that the independent member holds a seat at the pleasure of the government Whip. After all, as is well known, it is the Whips who have the power to send in a form and replace any member of a legislative or special committee.

I would suggest that the Speaker may rule that the government Whip could replace the member who was on the committee with the simple stroke of a pen; but he need not because in this instance that member supported the government. In this case the government most certainly had an effective majority of the committee.

The government Whip's next allegation is equally easily dispensed with. He says that I impugned the government by saying that it insisted on this version of Bill C-79, in response to pressure from its Quebec caucus. In fact his exact words taken from *Hansard* of October 12, at page 14107, are and I quote:

—the member says things about the motivation of members who cast a ballot in committee—

For the member for Kamloops to be out and about impugning the motivation of the members of this committee, the officers of this House, is a dastardly deed.

What was reported, Mr. Speaker, in *The Ottawa Citizen* of October 11, 1990 was, and I quote: "The NDP Whip charged that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had insisted on the clause requiring the RCMP to check before beginning investigations on the Hill in order to try to keep his Quebec caucus intact, earlier this year".

The facts are as follows: it was widely reported earlier this year that the pressure for this bill was coming from the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party. I have a series of press clippings, copies of which I will send over to my hon. colleagues if they are interested, which

demonstrate the wide coverage of the special interest of the Quebec caucus in this measure.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just want to clarify. Is the hon. member up on his own question of privilege or is he responding to certain allegations which have been alleged to have been made by a member opposite? I am just not certain that I am following.

I thought the hon. member was going to raise a question of privilege. I did not hear his case but now I hear, I think, a rebuttal. It is uncertain for me as to what the procedure is here. In view of comments that have been made maybe it is well in order for the hon. member to be proceeding, but I am at a loss; I do not know. Is this a reverse question of privilege or what is it?

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. member for Calgary West in a moment.

The hon. member for Calgary West has in effect put a suggestion forward. The hon. member for Kamloops is tending to respond, seriatim, to a number of statements which he says the hon. member for Calgary West has made. I can understand that, but the difficulty we are getting into, to which I think the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond is alluding, is that we still have an unfinished argument by the hon. member for Calgary West. The question of privilege which is before the House is the question of privilege of the hon. member for Calgary West. The hon. member for Kamloops has not filed a cross question of privilege, although he might deal with his own objections and concerns in the argument as he is already doing.

I do not want to cut off the hon. member for Kamloops if there is any hope at all of having further discussions between the two hon. members. My worry is that the longer we go on maybe the chance or possibility of the two hon. members being able to work out their differences, or at least some of them, and with dignity being able to let us know where it is not possible to work out some other differences may diminish if we get into too much debate at this time.

I am wondering if at this time in order to keep the procedure tidy—and I am indebted to the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond for raising the point; it has been concerning me for the last few minutes—the hon. member for Kamloops could give the Chair any indication as to whether and under what circumstances he might be able to postpone this matter in the Chamber