

Privilege—Mr. Cooper

would be appropriate, I suggest, for the Chair to reach a conclusion on the question whether or not there exists a prima facie case of privilege. Certainly on the face of it, at the moment, there indeed appears to be such a case presented, but in all fairness I think the Minister should be allowed the opportunity to make a full inquiry into the complaint and report back to the House and to the Hon. Member who raised the question.

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member who raised a question of privilege has made use of two avenues to air his grievance. First of all, he wrote to the Minister, and it seems that in his letter he was more specific than he was here in the House. In that case, if he has the courage to name names in his correspondence, he should wait for the Minister's reply before rising in the House and making accusations that he has been threatened. The accusation—

Some Hon. Members: No! No!

Mr. Pinard: All right, Mr. Speaker. He says there were no threats. So, if there were no threats, there is no question of privilege. However, if someone called me, as a Member of this House, and tried to intimidate me into not asking questions before clearing them with that person, I would have the courage to mention the name of the individual in the House, I would have the courage to tell you I have decided to bring the matter out into the open, namely that someone at Canada Post is intimidating me and preventing me from asking questions without clearing them with that person. It seems to me I would have the courage to say before the House who that person was.

So the Hon. Member has taken two approaches, the first one being to write to the Minister and wait for a reply. He preferred to use the second approach, before receiving his reply from the Minister. However, if he wants his question of privilege to hold up he should . . . Otherwise, he is abusing the parliamentary immunity he claims to have, which is conferred upon him by this House, if he does not have the decency and the courage to name the name of the person who breached his privileges.

It is not enough for Hon. Members to indulge in witch hunts and make all kinds of allegations that corporations are breaching their freedom of speech, if they do not have that courage. Especially since, as the Hon. Member claims, he admits he knows the person in question, especially since he claims to be able to do so. He should have the decency—

● (1520)

[English]

It is difficult to be courageous, Mr. Speaker, I understand, but if my rights were infringed to speak freely in the House and if anyone in Canada were to threaten me not to ask any questions before submitting my questions to him or her, I would have the courage to name that person in the House if I were to pretend my privileges in that same House had been abused. That is what I am asking of the Hon. Member. If he

does not have the courage to mention the name here, he should wait for the Minister to reply to his letter. If not, he should mention the name here, allow the Minister to make his inquiry and allow the Minister to come back to the House to give his version of the facts. If those facts are contradictory, of course there would not be any question of privilege.

I think the question may be serious, I do not know, but to allow it to be believed serious, the Hon. Member should at least name the individual or persons who in fact threatened him. I think that is elementary; otherwise it would become too easy to waste the time of the House by all sorts of witch hunts, pretending that representatives of Crown corporations are threatening Members not to ask any questions.

My intervention is very simple. All I am saying to the Hon. Member, who pretends to be threatened by an individual, is that if he wants to raise the matter here, he should have the courage to mention the name of the person.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I must say immediately how disappointed I am that a Member of this House would denigrate a question of privilege which bears so heavily on our right to function without fear or favour in this House. I would urge you, Mr. Speaker, to investigate this matter; I know you will, Sir, very carefully. Anything that can be interpreted by a Member to expose him or her to jeopardy or harm in the carrying out of his or her duties has to be investigated.

There are additional examples to the one the Hon. Member has brought up. I recall an incident during some fairly heavy discussion of the National Revenue Department. Advice tendered to me, in the criticism of tax officials, was to the effect to be very careful because "the next thing out of your mouth will result in an audit being done on your income tax". Fortunately, I am in a position to do that but I am sure that advice was given to encourage me to temper my comments.

There are forces outside of this House which have played on Members of Parliament. I mentioned today the chartered banks which are imposing tremendous pressure on West Coast fishermen. There are examples in this House of where the banks have imposed tremendous pressure on Members of Parliament. When the Bank Act was under consideration the Canadian Bankers Association asked for financial reviews of Members of Parliament, and beyond that—

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect to the Hon. Member, the Chair would like to hear argument related to the point of the Hon. Member for Peace River. The Hon. Member, without my passing judgment in any way on what he is saying, seems to be aside from the point raised by the Hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Skelly: I accept the rather lengthy preamble but I think the remarks put forward by the Government House Leader were unfortunate, to say the least. I think what he could do is support the call for an investigation of this matter by the Minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation, which