

Privilege—Mr. Robinson

allow the matter to come before the House at the earliest possible time.

The circumstances which give rise to the question of privilege are well known at this point to Members of the House, but I will set them out briefly. They concern the Hon. Member for Chambly who was a Member of this House in the last Parliament. He was re-elected in the November 21 election as a Conservative Member of Parliament with the support of his Party and the support of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney).

In this context I would note as well that the Prime Minister, through his principal secretary, was aware prior to the election of certain allegations of impropriety. Indeed, the then principal secretary, Peter White, on November 8 last, wrote a letter to RCMP Inspector Berubé in Québec saying that he was concerned because the Hon. Member had apparently indicated that he had been involved in some improprieties in 1985 and 1986. That merely goes to show the knowledge of the Prime Minister and that the Member was in fact elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament.

Certain allegations were made concerning the activities of the Member, serious allegations of alleged corruption, breach of trust and fraud. Indeed, a sworn statement by an RCMP inspector indicated that contractors interviewed with respect to one particular matter acknowledged that they were asked to donate a certain amount of money to a federal political party to show their gratitude. These are allegations of serious offences.

On April 14 of this year, the Hon. Member for Chambly was in fact charged by the RCMP with a number of counts of breach of trust and fraud. The next day the Member did in fact resign from the Conservative caucus and chose to sit as an independent Member of Parliament.

The circumstances surrounding the allegations are very serious. The maximum sentence to which the Hon. Member was subject was 10 years in the case of fraud and 5 years in the case of breach of trust. I think it is important to note as well when reviewing precedents that the circumstances of at least a number of the counts involve a fraud directly touching on this Parliament and

directly touching on public funds which were appropriated to this Parliament.

The Member has pleaded guilty to those offences. He has pleaded guilty, among other things, to an offence which indicates that he hired a number of employees purportedly for his staff here in the House of Commons and allegedly to do work for him. He has admitted that that work was not done and that the funds which were paid to those individuals were subsequently turned over to him and split between him and the president of his riding association. Apparently \$100 or \$200 was received by the alleged employees, but the bulk of the money was split, and he has admitted that and pleaded guilty to that.

The nature of the other offences involve bribes and breach of trust. Contractors paid the Hon. Member in exchange for work building a community centre in his constituency. I might note that the construction of that community centre involved a federal grant of some \$245,000 which the Hon. Member at the time bragged about having obtained for his constituents. We now learn that he has pleaded guilty to accepting bribes from a number of contractors in connection with that matter.

The allegations in question are very serious allegations. The circumstances of the offences are very serious. Most important, the Member himself, through his plea of guilty, has acknowledged his wrongdoing. He had been scheduled to appear in court on May 31, but on Tuesday of this week, he appeared with his counsel earlier than anticipated.

I think it is of some interest to note the comments of his counsel with respect to the circumstances of these offences. His counsel indicated that these were grave offences and very serious offences. In fact, he said that the evidence was so overwhelming that he advised his client to plead guilty in the face of that overwhelming evidence.

The allegations and the circumstances have been clearly established. The Member in question was sentenced, and I do not think anyone in the House could suggest that in view of the evidence he was sentenced harshly or excessively. He was sentenced to one day in prison, though he actually served about four and a half hours, had lunch in prison and then left, a \$20,000 fine and a three-year period of probation. This is in the face