

Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez

I believe that the statement by the Solicitor General has a clear implication that somehow or other I am a security threat to this country and, in fact, in some way this places a cloud over my functioning as a Member of Parliament.

I would suggest and remind Hon. Members that when I raised this matter of Mr. Hart spying on an MP, on myself, Mr. Justice Jerome ruled that there was *prima facie* evidence of a breach of privilege. Then when I put the appropriate question to the House, the Government of the day voted against the matter being examined by the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. Here we have the Solicitor General bringing back into this House the ghost of 1976 and admitting and saying that Mr. Hart "for years he did a laudable job" for the Government of Canada.

If you find that there is *prima facie* evidence of a breach of privilege, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) has raised a question of privilege. Are there other Members wishing to rise on this matter?

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, just to supplement the remarks of my hon. colleague, I think it is important to note that while the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher) appeared to have quoted from, I believe, page 500 of the report of the McDonald Commission in referring to the laudable nature of the activities of Mr. Hart, certainly the Solicitor General himself appeared to adopt those remarks and that characterization as his own.

• (1520)

I would remind Your Honour that the gentleman in question illegally opened mail, tapped telephones without warrants, possessed stolen merchandise and illegal weapons and bugged conversations of various politicians and Party caucuses.

The question of privilege is a very clear and very important one. If in fact the Solicitor General is suggesting even indirectly that the actions of Mr. Hart were in any way laudable, the implication is clearly that the targeting of a politician, the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) as well as the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand), may have been appropriate. Clearly that is quite unacceptable.

Finally, this is the same Minister who recommended the payment of \$56,000 of taxpayers' money, an *ex gratia* payment, to this individual. At the same time as this payment was recommended, payment was denied to another former member of the RCMP, Mr. Kim Westberg, who performed an outstanding service for his country in a major undercover operation.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you, at the very least, to call upon the Solicitor General to set the record straight by indicating that by the payment of this sum of \$56,000 or by his silence on the characterization of Warren Hart's actions as laudable, the Minister himself is not imputing that those actions were acceptable.

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to make it quite clear that the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) seems to be somewhat misinformed. I did not make the statement that "while in Canada for over four years he performed laudable service for the people of Canada". That was a conclusion reached by the McDonald Royal Commission after a rather exhaustive discussion of the entire matter. I merely quoted the statement made by that commission in its report.

I would also like to point out that I did not recommend the payment of \$56,000. This recommendation was made by a person who had conducted an independent inquiry into this particular matter. He came to the conclusion that this payment should be made, and as a result of that, the payment was so made.

I quite agree with the final statement made by my friend, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson). I would not in any way want to suggest or have Hon. Members feel that anything Mr. Hart did with respect to the characters or reputations of these two gentlemen would be condoned by me in any way. I regard both Hon. Members as hon. gentlemen. Indeed, one is my predecessor and I have no reason to consider him anything but an hon. gentleman, and the same is true of the Hon. Member from our northern Ontario community of Nickel Belt.

Mr. Speaker: The point the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) has made is an important one. Many Hon. Members who are here now remember the incidents of which the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt has reminded us, and they are not necessarily happy memories. I am not surprised at all that the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt has raised this matter.

The Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) made a suggestion which might resolve the matter, and that suggestion seems to have been picked up very quickly by the Solicitor General (Mr. Kelleher). In authorizing the payment of this amount of money to this particular individual upon the recommendation of a committee, the Solicitor General in no way endorses the activity of which the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt and no doubt others would complain. In fact, I think those complaints would go well beyond the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt.

The Chair is indicating that the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt would have a good deal of support in this House for the complaint he has brought to the Chair. The point the Chair is making is that the Hon. Member for Burnaby seems to have made a very helpful suggestion. I think the Hon. Solicitor General has made an absolutely unqualified statement indicating that in authorizing this payment, he is in no way and under no circumstances impugning the character, the loyalty or the patriotism of any Hon. Member in this place including the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt. As that statement was quite unequivocal, I think it would dispose of the matter at the present time.