

Privilege—Mr. Rae

when the government establishes Liberal Grit constituency offices where they have no business being and where taxpayers' money is not justifiably spent.

Madam Speaker: At this particular point in the debate on this question of privilege, would members not agree with me that they are now in the course of practically exhausting arguments which would be brought forward if a motion were moved to send this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections?

I must remind hon. members that the only thing they must do, in the course of discussing a question of privilege, is to show me where there is a breach of their privilege. I must say that members have not addressed themselves to that sufficiently, and, after listening to seven, eight or perhaps more members, I must conclude that I have heard arguments mostly on the substance of that question of privilege.

Members ought to know that the motion is not now before the House. I have not yet found a *prima facie* case of privilege, therefore, the arguments must be restricted to where the privilege has been breached. That has not happened, therefore, members must understand—

Mr. Nielsen: That is a generalization.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry?

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I certainly did not mean to interrupt but I could say that I was being specific.

Mr. Pinard: In your judgment.

Madam Speaker: When consistently, after four or five speakers, no one is able to address himself or herself to the very fundamental question which must be addressed at this stage, that is to say, where the privilege has been breached, members must understand that the Chair is tempted to cut off debate and decide that it has been sufficiently informed. That is what I intend to do. I have heard many arguments from both parties on the opposition side of the House, and very few from members on the government side. But, I have heard arguments, and I will now cut off the debate and proceed to another matter.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I presume it is the intention of the Chair to consider these matters very carefully. If Madam Speaker comes to the conclusion that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege, I presume you will be so informing the House so as to give either the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood or someone like myself the opportunity of moving the appropriate motion.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. member for reminding me of that. It is exactly what I intend to do. I will take the matter under advisement, study all the arguments, and report later to the House.

MR. BAKER (NEPEAN-CARLETON)—PREMATURE RELEASE OF ESTIMATES

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I think we have disposed of that particular question of privilege, but I should like to raise another which is much more serious than the one that occurred earlier; this is in respect of the lock-up. Madam Speaker will recall that we indicated the importance of Members of Parliament having the same privileges which we believe are appropriate for members of the press, because Members of Parliament have the right to be informed about matters. I think it was made clear that the only right Members of Parliament have is to have these matters tabled in the House of Commons. The fact of the matter is that I have in my hand a photocopy of a wire story which has not gone over the wires, across the country, via Canadian Press, which reveals to the public in complete detail of the estimates, before the estimates have been tabled in the House of Commons.

• (1730)

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Siddon: So much for Parliament!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Yes, so much for Parliament. Either that lock-up was for something or it was for nothing. I assume the government had the lock-up for something, which was to inform the press of the estimates pending the tabling in the House. It had to be that or else it was a meaningless gesture. I suggest that is what it was for.

Now the government is saying we argued this matter this afternoon on a question of privilege, therefore the estimates would be released. The document is still not tabled in the House of Commons, yet the subject matter has already been released. That is a clear violation of my rights and the rights of other Members of Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): It is a contempt of Parliament. I think we must consider very seriously the question of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston). I think there is an investigation owed to the House of Commons with respect to this matter. Indeed, the President of the Treasury Board must consider his own position within the government, given the fact there has been a release—

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I have in front of me the document handed to me. I am sure the Chair will want to look at it in order to consider it. The document deals with the matter of government outlays, the increase in those outlays from 13 per cent to 67.6 per cent—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I want to go through it, Madam Speaker, so that you will be able to understand its