

question. I happen to have known this individual, the Chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, for some years. I concur with what the Minister said. However, that is not the question.

Regardless of whether the Minister or the witnesses agree, a motion was properly put to take testimony under oath. The committee chose to vote for that motion and put those witnesses under oath. I was on that committee that day and voted for the motion to put the witnesses under oath. The Minister can surmise and guess what the committee had in mind if he wants. In fact, he said, "The committee is really saying he's a liar". The Minister is accusing the committee of calling the Chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Commission a liar. No such thought occurred in my mind, and I will tell the Minister right now that I certainly did not say that. I did not think it.

As I said, for whatever reason, the committee decided to put the witness under oath. The Minister is responsible for civil servants. He is not an ordinary Minister but the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) in charge of the various statutes that govern civil servants. The Chairman of the Unemployment Insurance Commission happens to be the Deputy Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister said, "I would have liked to see Gaetan Lussier walk right out of the room".

I did not say in my remarks yesterday that the Minister was mocking the committee. However, I believe he was counselling disrespect for the committee and ultimately disrespect for Parliament. I sit on that committee, as do all other members who sit on the committee, as a representative of Canadians.

It may be irrelevant, but let me point out that the committee member who moved the motion to put witnesses under oath was a Conservative member, one of the majority in the committee.

I believe there is a prima facie case of privilege. When a Minister of the Crown, the big cheese of the mandarins advises them to disregard a decision of a committee of Parliament, he is telling Mr. Lussier and Mr. Edwards—

Mr. de Cotret: No. That is false.

Mr. Rodriguez: You said it here. You said the report is accurate. It states, "I would have liked to see Gaetan Lussier walk right out of the room". What is Mr. Lussier to take from that? When it happens again Mr. Lussier will walk out of the room.

I believe there is evidence that the Minister has breached the privileges, not only of myself but of other Members of the House. You can chuckle and put your books down on the desk in disgust, but the fact of the matter is that there is clear advice to civil servants and I say it is a breach of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). Those watching might think that the Chair had done something with its books to show disgust. I just want it completely clear that the Hon. Member was not

referring to the Chair. The Chair is listening very carefully to this matter. I invite the Hon. Member to complete his remarks.

Mr. Rodriguez: Of course, Mr. Speaker, there is no reflection on the Chair. You were listening intently. I was referring to the way in which the Minister threw his paper down and appeared somewhat disgusted when I said he was counselling disrespect for Parliament. I did not give the interview. He gave the interview and he admitted it was accurate. Any senior civil servant reading this report could only take one conclusion from it, that the Minister is behind them if they walk out on the next committee meeting of Parliament where a motion is passed to put the witnesses under oath.

• (1520)

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I believe there is prima facie evidence of a breach of privilege and if the Chair so finds, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Minister for moving so quickly to return to the Chamber and, take part in this important matter. I also want to thank the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) for his intervention. I think I should advise Hon. Members that the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) raised a question of privilege on this exact matter. I think perhaps there was a slip-up somewhere but it was understood he would be notified when the matter returned to the Chamber. Today, unfortunately, the Hon. Member for La Prairie is in his constituency doing the job he has to do and, as a consequence, I am going to adjourn this matter once more to give the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) the opportunity to intervene if, indeed, he feels it is necessary.

Again I want to assure the Minister and the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) that I have listened very carefully to their words on the matter. I want to thank all Hon. Members again for their clear interventions. The Chair will consider the matter very carefully. However, as I say, I will not prepare any judgment on this matter until I hear from the Hon. Member for La Prairie, which should be soon.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1986-87, (NO. 2)

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-40, an Act to provide borrowing authority, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the net result of the federal Government's determination to reduce the deficit has been that we have not actually substantially reduced the deficit but have in fact transferred most of it to