

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member was undoubtedly detained on important business. The point the hon. member is making is the point I have to decide.

It has been presented to the Chair in this question of privilege, and that is exactly what I will be deciding.

[Translation]

NEED FOR PROMPT RULINGS ON QUESTIONS OF
PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, since we are dealing with questions of privilege, I would remind the Chair that we raised two questions of privilege which were very important and very urgent, especially regarding the right of the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie to sit in this House. Mr. Speaker, I think waiting for weeks and weeks, when there is a major question mark in the minds of some members of the public as a result of this question of privilege, is tantamount to shirking our responsibility to ensure that members of this House have every right to sit in this House, and I am sure we all agree! However, we hope that very shortly you will take away the doubts that were used concerning the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Furthermore, although at this very moment, planning operations for the Hibernia project are underway, we have yet to receive a reply to the question of privilege we raised, and although the legislation has not yet become law, considerable sums of money are being invested in this project.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I submit, with respect, that both questions are urgent and pressing and are an excellent example of the need for raising questions of privilege, and that any delay in dealing with these questions is an embarrassment to most of us.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's point is well taken. For the time being, my answer is: soon.

[English]

Mr. Blaikie: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your admonition and, indeed, ruling that further discussion of the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan ought to go no further for fear that it might lead into other matters.

The fact is that this point and others that have been raised in the last little while cannot be separated from what I would see as the over-all condition of the House, which I would ask Your Honour to have a hard look at. I do not know when all this started. It is easy to point fingers but the fact of the matter is that I feel we are sliding into some form of anarchy.

• (1140)

I am reminded of a Yeat's poem which, to paraphrase, goes: the blood-dimmed tide of anarchy is loosed, everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned.

You, Mr. Speaker, have a special responsibility to protect the House of Commons, where democracy either succeeds or fails in the country. I would ask you to take a hard look at this issue and at every other issue and seize the authority that all Canadians and indeed, all members of Parliament, in their heart of hearts are looking to you to exercise in restoring some dignity and order to this place. If you are not able to do that, then I fear the worst for the entire political process.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we might take some advice from our esteemed colleague and simply get us all out of this particular problem so committees can function simply by giving unanimous consent at this time to the Striking Committee report to set up the standing committee.

Mr. Blaikie: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Out of regard for many years experience in this place, I will hear the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona for a minute or more longer.

I must point out that one of the ways we do retain order is to operate under the rules. We are slipping a bit. It is not with any malice of forethought, I am sure.

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity that the member on the government side just took to introduce a kind of partisan strategy into what I intended as a very well meaning message to the Speaker and to all members of Parliament is just the sort of thing that I was being implicitly critical of when I spoke up.

Mr. Hawkes: How is that partisan? Explain yourself.

Mr. Speaker: I think under the circumstances it would be wise if we moved on.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am going to relate very indirectly to what