

Privilege—Mr. Rae

federal Member of Parliament. There is no reason in the world why the governing party should be able to take unilateral credit for grants and programs which are under the authority of the Parliament of Canada while other Members of Parliament are denied that same right.

The Prime Minister says this is the real world. Let me tell him about the real world of politics in my constituency. The real world of politics in my constituency is that when there is an opening of a senior citizens' building I am not allowed on the platform because I am not a member of the governing party. That is the real world of politics. Do hon. members not believe that the residents of my constituency resent that implication and resent what happened?

Mr. Mazankowski: Suffer.

Mr. Rae: That is why it seems to me if Your Honour is not prepared to find that there is a question of privilege involved here, Your Honour should at least very carefully consider the nature of the practice involved whereby public funds are being used in a totally partisan way and whereby members are told that the only condition under which they will be allowed to take the federal case to the people of Canada is if they happen to be members of the Liberal Party of Canada. That is a corruption of the political process, but it is also an insult to every opposition member of the House.

With respect to this particular question of privilege, Your Honour has a specific case here in which we are told that the practice with respect to the information which we receive as Members of Parliament regarding grants given out in our ridings is different for a member of the Liberal Party than it is for a member of the opposition.

With respect to the wisdom of the practice, I remind Your Honour that when this same practice was brought to the attention of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), she fired her assistant who was said to have been responsible. I would simply like Your Honour to consider very carefully and comment on a similar practice whereby a multiculturalism grant is given out in the riding of Ottawa Centre, and it is the hon. member for Ottawa Centre who takes the credit for the fact that the grant is going out, but when a multiculturalism grant is given out in the riding of Broadview-Greenwood, the Member of Parliament for Broadview-Greenwood is not even told it is happening. If that is not a discrepancy, an abuse of process and a practice which affects my rights, not as a member of the New Democratic Party but as a Member of Parliament, then I suggest I do not know what is. If we cannot appeal to Your Honour to comment on the wisdom of this practice and to see that this kind of abuse does not go on, to whom can we make such an appeal?

● (1520)

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) rising on this question of privilege?

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Yes I am, Madam Speaker. I listened with open ears to the argument just made,

and I have to cast my mind back to about a year or so ago in order to judge the crocodile tears of the hon. member and his complaint about being left out of the decisions of the Liberal Party; decisions on which he may be left in now. But I do not want that recollection of mine to detract in any way from the importance of the issue he raises and which was raised before.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, I had undertaken to write you about the judgment of Mr. Speaker Jerome telling you about the practice which had been adopted on another day on a matter which he considered improper at that time on the basis of precedents, although he was wrong. He felt compelled to comment on that alleged impropriety in order to protect members of the House. There were other members of the New Democratic Party who were involved at that time. I was going to bring that comment by Mr. Speaker and that precedent to your attention, Madam Speaker. However, the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) has saved me the necessity of doing it by mentioning precisely the precedent and the judgment to which I referred at that time.

The practice to which he referred is one which should not exist in the House of Commons. I do not know whether that is the grant which is alleged to have lain around in the office of the hon. member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) before he was ready to present it. I understand it had come through the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin), as the political minister, and was lying in the hon. member's office. Although this may not have been the same grant, it was one of the cases. This is the kind of practice that should be frowned upon. The Speaker's role—and I say it with respect—is to keep order, but it is also to protect the proprieties which should exist between members of the House of Commons. No government, regardless of its stripe, can make fish of some members and fowl of others. That is the kind of practice being referred to by the hon. member.

The precedent which I wanted to draw to your attention, Madam Speaker, has now been referred to, and this will save me the necessity of making the argument. I think that anyone who listens to this debate would be moved to suggest that, although such conduct is not illegal—no one would ever argue that—it is most inappropriate and should be condemned. I say with respect that it should be condemned from the Chair.

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I rise to try to clarify to some extent the accusations which have been made, both by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) with regard to this case. It is not the only case, because I have done this on a number of occasions, and I will tell you, Madam Speaker, exactly what I have done.

In dealing with my constituents I come from time to time across a group of people who tell me they have made an application to the Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming) or to another minister for a grant under a particular granting program. They want to know what the status of that grant is and when the cheque will be coming if it has been approved. I come back to my office and call the minister