

*Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez***PRIVILEGE**

MR. DIONNE (NORTHUMBERLAND-MIRAMICHI)—REMARK
MADE BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege arises from a remark made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition in which he cast aspersions on all members—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member may want to consider giving the Chair proper notice of this question of privilege under the terms of the Standing Orders.

MR. RODRIGUEZ—ANSWER GIVEN BY POSTMASTER GENERAL

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising from the answer the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) gave me this afternoon in this House to the first question I put to him.

The point I want to raise is the suggestion or the accusations in the answer the Postmaster General gave, that I was more interested in protecting lawbreakers in the Post Office than in coming to grips with the problems in the Post Office. At no point in my question to the Postmaster General did I raise any concern with respect to those who have been indicted and those who have been charged with having broken the law. I raised specifically the question of letters which have been sent to employees in the Ottawa local, for example. Some 800 letters have gone out to CUPW employees of the Post Office.

I should like to put the letter on the record. This one is addressed to Mr. Patrick Berry, machine processing, and reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Berry

A review is currently being undertaken of all the activities which occurred during the period from 19th October 1978 to 26th October 1978, inclusive.

Your actions during the above noted period will be investigated further. You will be advised of any disciplinary action which may be taken in regard to your conduct.

A copy of this letter is being placed on your personal file.

Yours truly

A. Clare
Plant Manager

The question I asked dealt with the fact that this letter was being placed on the personnel files of hundreds and hundreds of CUPW employees of the Post Office. In trying to make political points or whatever, the Postmaster General said to this House that I was more—he was imputing a motive to the question I asked—said I was more interested in protecting lawbreakers than raising a legitimate question. I say that the Postmaster General is certainly being irresponsible and certainly disrespectful to members of this House when he stands up and imputes motives of the kind he imputed to me.

The second point I want to raise, is that the Postmaster General accused me of being part of “The Light Brigade Charge.” Mr. Speaker, I happen to be the Post Office critic for my party in this House. Questions which arise with respect

[Mrs. Campagnolo.]

to human relations within the Post Office at this particular time are extremely important. We are in a period following a strike, Mr. Speaker, and tension is high. We are in a period where very shortly we will be dealing with a Crown corporation in the Post Office. It is absolutely essential that there be good industrial relations in the Post Office. It is with that concern, and with the agreement of my party, that I raised this question today. We are absolutely at the crux of the relationship with the Post Office.

I pointed out in my question that in modern industrial relations in the private sector, after a strike, where there are modern and avant-garde approaches to industrial relations, no witch-hunting takes place after a long and bitter struggle in the work place.

I asked the Postmaster General if he would reconsider this letter which he has told workers will be placed on their personnel files and if he would give us an assurance that it would be removed. The Postmaster General got up and accused me of being part of a “Light Brigade Charge”. That is contrary to the concept of responsible ministers responding to critics in the opposition parties of this House. The Postmaster General wraps himself around Dennis McDermott. I want to say, while Mr. McDermott is not here to claim privilege, that to accuse Mr. McDermott of abandoning the rights of workers in the Post Office—that he made a broad statement that in effect—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me the hon. member has left his original point which had some bearing in privilege in respect to a response that he got in the question period. He is now going into a criticism of the response given by the minister. I am sure he is aware that he cannot, at this point, be critical of the minister's answer. That is a matter for debate. If the hon. member has a question of privilege I will be glad to hear it.

Mr. Rodriguez: In conclusion, then, Mr. Speaker, I believe I do have privilege in this matter. I think the only honourable thing for the hon. minister to do is to withdraw those remarks which imputed motives to me this afternoon.

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I ever questioned the motive of the hon. member. I said I wondered if—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lamontagne: I do not think there was any question of giving motive to whatever he thought. The way he asked the question there was nothing else left in my mind but maybe that was his thought. If it was not, good for him. As far as my allegation regarding the charge of the Light Brigade is concerned, I have the article here. Mr. McDermott said it; I did not say it. I said I wondered if he was part of it; I did not say he was part of it. It is up to him to judge.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. The issue being raised here, I think, is of very great importance indeed, whether the