

Privilege—Mr. Rae

Mr. Kaplan: —not particularly Liberal, Conservative or NDP ridings, because the ridings for which the Prime Minister asked me to assume this responsibility do not only include ridings held by members of the opposition, but as well a number of ridings which are represented by Liberal members.

Mr. Knowles: Do they know it?

Mr. Kaplan: In saying that, I want to point out how very inaccurate it is to characterize this as involving members opposite having to come crawling to me on all fours to get money for their ridings. This is a perfect example; the hon. member did not even know that this application had come in from his riding. Over \$15,000 was awarded in a perfectly proper grant. The Member of Parliament did not come crawling on all fours to me. He certainly does not have to, and this grant proves that he does not have to.

Let me come to the responsibilities the ministers have been asked to assume. It is sometimes believed by Canadians, if their riding is not held or represented by a member of the government or a member of the government party, that they cannot address the government directly but are obliged to make representations to the government only through members of the caucus, members of the government or through members of the opposition. I am glad to have this opportunity to let the people in the hon. member's riding and other ridings know that there are ways to make representations to the government other than through their own Member of Parliament, whether he is a member on the government side or a member on the opposition side.

Mr. Rae: This is incredible.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rae: It is straightforward government programming; it has nothing to do with politics.

Mr. Kaplan: I think the hon. member opposite should check the facts.

Mr. Rae: I have checked the facts.

Mr. Kaplan: I am willing to use this case, although I am not familiar with all the details of the background, as an example to see whether anyone came crawling on all fours to a member of the government or to a member of the government party to get this particular grant. I am sure the member will find that no such demeaning activity took place, nor should it.

Mr. Rae: That is not what I said.

Mr. Kaplan: I should like the good constituents of Broadview-Greenwood to know that if any of them want to make representations to a member of the government, the Prime Minister of Canada has asked me to go out of my way to be available to the people living in that riding.

Mr. Rae: This is unbelievable.

Mr. Kaplan: If they should choose to make representations directly to a member of the government, they will find me available and willing, within the limits of my other responsibilities, to meet with them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kaplan: Of course, they continue to be free, as are all Canadians, to make representations to any member of the government, to their own Member of Parliament or to other Members of Parliament. It is a matter of their choice. If they want to come and make representations to me, I should like them to know that the Prime Minister of Canada has asked me to take the extra trouble to be available to people from that riding.

Miss Jewett: I cannot believe it.

Mr. Kaplan: I make no apologies for that.

Some hon. Members: You should.

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, we have been treated to the greatest example of patronizing, condescension and arrogance I have ever seen in this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I am surprised and shocked that it would come from a Member of Parliament who I thought heretofore understood what Parliament was all about and what a Member of Parliament was all about.

Only a Liberal could make that argument with a straight face, although to save himself he at least smiled when he sat down. It is a carryover of the ethics of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) which he expressed many years ago as to his view of Parliament, that parliamentarians are nobodies; that somehow Parliament is the handmaidens of the government. And now this is being extended to ridings.

If the minister is prepared to put the doctrine with which he just dealt to the test, if the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) wants to put a motion to send this entire matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, I am prepared to second it. If it is seconded, I want to see the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) rise in his place and say that he is prepared to let it go. Then we will have an opportunity not only to get the answer to the question put by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), but also an opportunity to get to the bottom of what I think is a sleazy practice on the part of the minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: I will hear one more intervenor on this question.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on this question of privilege because I think it is