

refusal to permit Soviet journalist Konstantin Geivandov to re-enter Canada, and associations with Mr. Geivandov on the part of CBC executive producer Mark Starowicz. In doing so, I have done no more than what is obviously one of my duties, rights and privileges as a member of parliament, namely, to bring to the attention of this House for consideration a serious matter involving possible serious improprieties in the field of national security.

Last night the CBC radio program "The World at Six", and later the CBC national TV news, carried a statement by CBC president Picard that demonstrated manipulation and misuse of CBC news facilities in what I believe can only be considered an attempt to interfere with my right to pursue this matter in the House of Commons. Mr. Picard, an appointed government official, used the full news facilities of all CBC radio and TV outlets to state that the raising of the Geivandov-Starowicz matter in the House by myself, a democratically elected member of parliament, constituted, and I quote the words attributed to him exactly, "hiding behind parliamentary immunity".

It is precisely because a member of this House is guaranteed parliamentary immunity by constitutional precedent that he is able to freely speak out on important issues—indeed, this is a privilege of a member of this House—and for the CBC president to misuse the facilities of the publicly-owned CBC to make it appear that by speaking out on a matter here I have committed a very serious offence is, I submit, gross interference with my privilege properly to perform my duties on the part of a senior, unelected public official.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Picard attempted to intimidate me in the performance of such duties by further using CBC facilities last night to throw threatening smears in my direction by stating that my action in pursuing the matter of Geivandov and Starowicz in this chamber, and I quote the exact words attributed to him, "smacks of McCarthyism and witch hunting of the worst kind".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: It is also very significant that Mr. Picard received a complete monopoly on the CBC last night in regard to all aspects of this matter.

I believe it is now most pertinent to my question of privilege, as a result of Mr. Picard's actions, to state the nature and the details of a telephone call I received last week. It was from a person identifying himself as calling on behalf of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I was threatened and advised that if I pursued further in this House, and I quote the exact words used—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member must surely realize that in going into a description of a telephone call of this nature there are severe dangers as to the authenticity of the source of the call. In addition, the hon. member is now alluding to an event which took place several days ago, and there is a very steadfast rule of the House that any matter constituting a question of privilege or any aspect thereof must be raised at the first available opportunity. If the hon. member wishes to deal with the question of privilege vis-à-vis the events of last night and

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those he has described up to now, I submit, at least in terms of having the Chair consider whether there is a prima facie question of privilege, he is not in any difficulty. However, if the hon. member wishes to go back several days and deal with a telephone call which did not then constitute a question of privilege, this would give the Chair considerably more difficulty.

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the Chair, may I explain. I am prepared to state clearly why this matter of the telephone call would not have been a question of privilege in itself last week, but becomes one very much so now in view of subsequent events that I was about to mention. I think it is very pertinent and I do hope I will have the privilege of making the connection so that Your Honour will be able to rule whether it is indeed pertinent.

The call was from a person who identified himself at the time as calling on behalf of the CBC. I should like to quote the words used. They were to this effect: "Would I pursue further the matter of the Pravda journalist cast in the House of Commons?" At the time I did not consider that this call came from the CBC, and I would now like to say that I hope indeed that it did not come from the CBC. But I was told that if I did pursue the case, the CBC would not hesitate to paint me—again I quote the exact words used—as a "McCarthyite" and "screwball". I was also advised that if I doubted the authenticity of the phone call, I would merely have to proceed to raise the matter in the House and I would quickly become aware of what the CBC would do to me.

At the time of this call I advised two members of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of having received it: I advised, last Thursday, CBC press gallery member John Drewery, for whom I have the greatest respect, and later CBC newsman Hal Jones. In other words, details of the telephone call were a matter of record with the CBC five days before Mr. Picard did precisely what the caller warned me would happen.

Last night, Mr. Picard's monopoly statement also interfered with my privileges in that the direct implication was that I was committing a serious offence by raising a matter here unless—and I quote his word—"illegal" acts are involved. Aside from the fact that it is the privilege of a member to raise any matter, within reason, in this House, I consider it my right and privilege to raise a matter that, while it may or may not have criminal or illegal implications, certainly does have moral and ethical implications. After all, this is a question that deals with national security, as proved by the government itself by the mere fact that it has denied Mr. Geivandov's re-entry into Canada.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a senior public servant has misused government-owned news media in an attempt to intimidate me in exercising my rights and privileges as a member of the House. If you should consider this a legitimate question of privilege, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie):

That the matter be referred to the committee on privileges and elections.