

details of providing such facilities. Statements which particularly concern certain areas are often best made in those areas. For instance, I have frequently made announcements affecting the grain industry, in the prairie provinces. This, it seemed to me, was a course which was natural to take. This particular statement is one which it seems to me would naturally be made in the Atlantic or in the Pacific region. To deprive the press and the people in that area of the opportunity from time to time to deal with announcements first-hand, rather than in a delayed fashion, seems to me to be an extraordinary demand on the hon. member's part. In any event, Mr. Speaker, I believe that as the hon. member has framed his motion it is more in the nature of a rules and procedure question than one of privilege.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, there are some facts which ought to be underscored with respect to this matter. There might be occasions when ministers might choose to make statements in the way the hon. gentleman has chosen. But I think it is contempt of parliament to make statements in that way, outside the House, on issues of an important nature which have taken up a great deal of time during debates in this chamber and during the question period, particularly when the minister himself is here, when he has not yet boarded his aircraft.

Mr. McGrath: He is leaving at four o'clock.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) says the minister is leaving at four o'clock. Not too long ago the House undertook a revision of its rules. It did this for the purpose, not of limiting the rights of members with respect to the discussion of issues of public importance—as this one certainly is—but of extending those rights. We provided for the practice of making statements on motions at particular times, with questions to follow from those members who are interested.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it does impinge upon the right of a member to express himself on a matter of public interest when the original statement to which he must respond is made outside the House of Commons. That is the case in this instance. With that in mind, I should like Your Honour to examine the motion which has been put forward by my hon. friend, from the point of view of privilege. If it is not possible for Your Honour to find that it is a question of privilege, I should like you to address yourself to the more general question which has been raised. Perhaps Your Honour, in the position you occupy, might be able to suggest a way out of this difficulty.

I take the view, however, that basically it does affect our rights. The rights of the hon. member for St. John's East, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall), and members from the maritimes generally, as well as those who come from the west coast and who are interested in air-sea rescue, are impinged upon, in particular their right to

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direct questions to the minister, if the minister decides to make a statement outside the House.

I respectfully suggest that hon. members need guidance from the Chair, possibly in the form of a statement as to how we should proceed, what the rule means, whether ministers themselves can choose what course to take, depending on their estimation of the importance of a statement and the advantage of making it in a particular location. Perhaps the subject might be referred by Your Honour, as the first commoner, to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization or, if not, a strong suggestion might be forthcoming from the Chair to that effect.

The practice about which we complain is wrong in principle because it denies members who have repeatedly pressed an issue, as the hon. member for St. John's East has done in this case, day after day and week after week, an opportunity to comment at an appropriate time on what is being proposed. Suddenly, the only right they have is the limited right of asking questions during the oral question period, instead of the much more extended opportunity they would have enjoyed under Standing Order 15(3). This is an important question not just for the opposition but for parliament as a whole. I should like to see it dealt with as a question of privilege, but if Your Honour cannot see your way clear to do so, then in other ways such as I have indicated.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I support very strongly the position taken by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) in asserting that what has happened today is contempt of parliament. Before developing my argument, brief though it will be, I should like to say that for an attempt to avoid the issue the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) has taken the prize today. For him to stand and say it surprises him that a Newfoundlander should object to a statement being made in Newfoundland, when that same Newfoundlander, as a member of parliament, is asking that a statement be made here, is not facing up to the situation at all. As a matter of fact, he shot his own case full of holes when he admitted that search and rescue is of concern not only to Newfoundland but to other Atlantic areas, to the Pacific coast and, as far as the Department of National Defence is concerned, to all parts of Canada. So the issue is one of concern to the nation, and the place to deal with it is here in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, I realize the difficulty the Chair always faces with regard to questions of privilege because the definitions of privilege are so narrow. But, surely, what has happened is contemptuous of parliament if, as the hon. member for St. John's East says, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson) is, or at least was, in his office on Parliament Hill and simply refuses to make a statement here because he wants to make it in Newfoundland tonight. That is certainly treating the House of Commons with something a lot less than respect. There is a sentence in citation 108(1) of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition which provides that anything that may be considered contempt of court by a tribunal is a breach of privilege if