

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 25, 1989

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[English]

POINT OF ORDER

WITHDRAWAL OF REMARKS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the midst of Question Period I asked a question of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and on reflection, after reading *Hansard*, it was certainly not my intention to use unparliamentary language. However, after reading *Hansard* I can see where the Chair would perhaps come to the conclusion that in point of fact what I said was unparliamentary. That being the case, and my intention was not to use unparliamentary language, I wish to withdraw any intention that may have been said or otherwise concluded by the Chair as being unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Hon. Member. I should tell the House that the Hon. Member extended the appropriate courtesies, called me personally and we discussed the matter. I did not want to raise it further yesterday. I appreciate the generous comments of the Hon. Member, which again are in the proper traditions of this place.

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PRIVILEGE

HOUSE OF COMMONS—MEMBER FOR CHAMBLY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege of which I have given Your Honour notice. The question of privilege which I wish to outline today arises from the reported conviction following a plea of guilty on Tuesday last of the Member for Chambly (Mr. Grisé).

Before giving an outline of the circumstances that led to that, I want to take a couple of minutes to remind Members of the House and Your Honour of the seriousness with which the House has historically viewed questions of privilege and of the nature of privilege.

Erskine May and Beauchesne's set out very clearly the nature of privilege. Privileges of Parliament are stated to be rights which are absolutely necessary for the due execution of the powers of the House, rights which are exercised by each House for the protection of its Members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity. That is from Erskine May.

As well, each House claims the right to punish actions which, while not privilege breaches of a specific privilege, are offences against its authority or dignity. Such actions though often called breaches of privileges are more popularly distinguished as contempts. The powers and procedures of each House in dealing with cases of contempt are treated in subsequent chapters of Erskine May and, indeed, of Beauchesne, and I will make reference to those in due course.

I want to note as well that it is clearly pointed out in Erskine May, and again in Beauchesne, that alleged breaches of privilege or contempt which are committed out of the House or out of the precincts of the House may in fact be brought before the House in a number of ways including by a complaint of any Member of the House. It is on that basis that I rise this morning on this question of privilege which in fact constitutes a contempt of this House.

• (1110)

The purpose of raising the question of privilege this morning is to seek to persuade Your Honour that a prima facie case of breach of privilege or contempt of the House exists, thus ensuring that the subject matter of this motion could come before the House on an urgent basis. At the conclusion of my remarks, I will explain why I feel it is so important that Your Honour recognize that a prima facie case is made. Without in any way ruling on the substance of the question, it is important that Your Honour find that a prima facie case is made sufficient to