

*Privilege—Mr. Johnston***PRIVILEGE**

MR. JOHNSTON—LETTER FROM DEFEATED CONSERVATIVE
CANDIDATE TO MINISTER

Mr. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege arises out of the question which I attempted to put in the House a few moments ago. I regard this as a serious matter in that it does affect the privilege of every member in the House.

I apologize if my preamble was inordinately long, but the point I was trying to make is that the defeated Tory candidate in my riding wrote a letter to the Postmaster General (Mr. Fraser) which I say, Mr. Speaker, affects the privilege of the elected representatives of this House. I feel it is appropriate that I read the passage of the letter to which I refer. He said:

I have no doubts whatsoever that the correct person to speak to in every riding is the Conservative candidate, whether elected or not—

Surely I have a right to ask the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Baker) in the absence of the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) whether this indeed, coming as it does from a senior member of the party, represents either the official or the unofficial view of the government of defeated Tory candidates in ridings across this country.

Mr. Speaker: I would want to be clear as to the ground which the hon. member is raising now. Is he saying to the House that the Postmaster General (Mr. Fraser) has put that statement in writing, or is he saying that someone from outside the House has put that statement in writing?

Mr. Johnston: Mr. Speaker, that statement in writing was made in a letter from the defeated Tory candidate to the Postmaster General.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Surely the hon. member will understand that people outside this House, regardless of their position, may make comments of that sort almost at will. If the House finds it contemptuous, it may be apologetic in some way, it is a different matter for a person outside the House to make that kind of statement. The hon. member might want to examine the precedents and see by way of notice if he seeks to raise it as a question of privilege in a formal way.

If the minister were to have said such a thing, it might be a different matter, and even there I am not suggesting that it would found a question of privilege. But to raise the point that someone other than a member of the House had made that kind of statement, even as offensive as it may be to the hon. member, it cannot on the face of it be raised in the way the hon. member is trying to raise it now.

That is all I say to him. If he wants to examine the precedents—and he is not in any way inhibited at this moment—and if he feels after notice there is some area of privilege and there is an argument on it that he wants to develop, he is free, of course, to give the Chair notice and argue the question in that way. But simply to raise it in the

[Mr. MacKay.]

way he has now does not give rise at this moment to privilege in that form.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. ALEXANDER—APOLOGY FOR REMARKS MADE TO HON.
MEMBER FOR ESSEX-KENT

Hon. Lincoln M. Alexander (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, when one is an opposition member as I was for 11 years, one builds up a sort of combative, adversary attitude which sometimes allows one to get carried away. That is all right on that side of the House, but on this side of the House it is not. Yesterday there was an exchange between the hon. member for Essex-Kent (Mr. Daudlin) and myself. I think he had a very legitimate question, but not having forgotten my opposition instinct, and being “ready for the kill”, I went overboard and referred to the hon. member in a way that I think is not in keeping with the conduct of a gentleman, particularly that of a minister. I indicated that the hon. member did not have the guts to ask the question.

I have been thinking about that, Mr. Speaker, and this afternoon in order to explain to the hon. member my bombastic rhetoric I went to him to say that I was sorry. I just wanted publicly to say that I now sit as a minister and I will have to watch my tongue, and now it is being bitten!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: I can assure the hon. member that I did not mean it.

This place is a very funny place. We do have this cut and thrust back and forth, but really we do respect one another. We appreciate one another's jobs. I just want to tell the hon. member that I am sorry and that it will not happen again—as far as he is concerned!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robert Daudlin (Essex-Kent): Mr. Speaker, you will notice that I was also attempting to obtain the floor. It was on this same point of order or privilege, whichever it is. I concur, and want to concur for all hon. members, with what the minister said. This is not something that comes to me on the spur of the moment; indeed, the minister had come to me indicating his intention to raise this issue.

I want only to reiterate something in the same vein which the leader of this party indicated the other day, that is, that notwithstanding the partisanship and the active cut and thrust of this chamber, there still remains a certain amount of respect for the individuals in this place on both sides of the House. I respect the minister for having stood in his place and apologized for his statement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!