

Privilege—Mr. Oberle

role of private members in this House. It is one which has changed significantly the role of a private member in the way he represents his constituents. I have numerous examples. I will not cite them all but I hope you will allow me to cite a few to demonstrate how the present government is asserting extra-parliamentary jurisdiction and control over public business through its political friends.

● (1720)

What has happened to this institution in the last little while? Are we, as Members of Parliament, still servants of this institution or have we become the masters? Are we still here to adjudicate and advocate the legitimate aspirations and rights of those who have elected us to this House? How presumptuous of us to say that the institution to which we have been elected should be ours to change. It is somewhat akin to joining a football team. As soon as you are chosen to be a quarterback, you change the rules of the game. It is not for the quarterback or for the members of the team to change the rules. The rules, the Constitution and the order of this House, the time-honoured traditions of this House, cannot be changed by the membership here, and I include in that membership members of the government. We are saying that the House of Commons is the highest court in the land, yet you, Madam Speaker, are being told every day that there are some members who stand accused of being in contempt of that high court.

As you recall, I raised a question of privilege a couple of days ago. I clearly made the case where a minister, a senior official of this House of Commons, was guilty of contempt of the laws made in this House. It is a strange high court where one can be contemptuous, yet a person cannot be accused of being in contempt; where a person can stand up and lie and yet cannot be accused of being a liar.

I would like you to reflect seriously upon what has been happening here in the last few days, Madam Speaker. We are being accused of filibustering the debate, call it what you may; but what this government is doing is harvesting the seeds of discord and dissension by the arrogance it has shown over the last ten years, particularly over the last six months.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is debating something which is not even clear to me. The hon. member is certainly debating. Would he please state very clearly his question of privilege?

Mr. Oberle: Madam Speaker, in my notice to you I stated my question of privilege, namely that the government is asserting itself in an extraparliamentary way in that certain ministers of the Crown and certain persons, who have never been Members of Parliament but have become members of a very privileged class in this country, are asserting themselves publicly. This seriously reflects on me as a Member of Parliament and upon every other member of this House.

Madam Speaker: I interrupt the hon. member to say this much. His question of privilege relates to certain extraparliamentary practices. I want to remind the hon. member that a question of privilege has to be related to proceedings in the

House. If he cannot relate, whatever it is he wants to raise to proceedings in the House, it will be very difficult for me to find a question of privilege, but I am open to the hon. member's arguments.

Mr. Oberle: Madam Speaker, it is certainly my intention to give references to demonstrate that at least one former high-ranking minister of the government has in a serious way offended the conflict of interest guidelines tabled in this House on two occasions, first in 1979 by the government headed by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), and then in 1980 by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

In order to make my case, I have to preface my remarks so I can be assured that you will be able to adjudicate on my question of privilege. I have said that this country is beginning to be ruled by a very privileged class. To become a member of this privileged class, you have either to be a member, a supporter or a friend of the Liberal Party. Three weeks ago a person who has never been in the House of Commons seriously harmed me by coming between me and my responsibilities in this House of Commons.

I found it necessary to consult with the minister responsible for housing to seek his support in the building of a community college residence in my constituency. This was a matter of the highest priority, not only to the college but to the whole area. I attempted to take this case to the minister. I phoned his office in an attempt to arrange a meeting. After several attempts I was asked by the minister's executive assistant whether the matter had to do with the building of a students' residence at the college of New Caledonia. I told him that it did. I told the assistant it was most important that I see the minister. The reply given to me was that the matter had been brought to the minister's attention by a Monica Becott. The minister had told Mrs. Becott, who brought the matter to Ottawa, that he did not have a mandate to build community college residences in different areas.

Monica Becott is the person who ran against my colleague the hon. member for Prince George-Bulkley Valley (Mr. McCuish) in the last election. Mrs. Becott happens to be the only Liberal in Prince George who is a member of this privileged class.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. There is no question of privilege that I can see up until now. The hon. member is referring to all sorts of things except matters relating to the privileges of members of this House. If the hon. member wants to make a case against a minister who has not paid sufficient attention to something that was brought to his attention by the hon. member, he can do that, but not under the guise of a question of privilege.

I would ask hon. members to interpret privilege in the sense that I have many times recalled to the House. I do not think I need give members a definition of privilege again; I have given it to the House several times. I am sure the hon. member will want to make certain that he does have a question of privilege in the sense that it is defined according to our rules.