

Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez

First, accepting the assurances given by the Solicitor General that no instructions for this alleged activity were given by the RCMP and therefore that the RCMP was not responsible for them—and this has not been recorded or kept by them—in the face of those assurances there may still be a question of privilege relating to the position of the hon. member about whom an allegation had been made by way of a sworn statement that he has been the subject of electronic surveillance. That may stand on its own, and it may not. I do not know.

The point is that it seems to me there is a very serious possibility that the hon. member for Nickel Belt may have a question of privilege while the Solicitor General's assurances may be totally accepted, in which case one of the difficulties I will have will be in resolving the matter of the reference of the statements of the Solicitor General to the committee. That may be a problem, but basically the possibility of electronic surveillance of a member of the House of Commons and a sworn statement to that effect by some sort of an intelligence agent is, on the face of it, a very serious matter.

I am concerned that by allowing that to stand alone as a question of privilege we may be opening the door to questions of privilege which would be raised in every case that a member, no matter where he may find himself, either inside or outside this building or in or outside the performance of his duties, may be interfered with in any way and that we may be extending the parameters of questions of privilege.

However, I do not want to inform the House that I take this motion seriously and that I accept, along with other members who have spoken today, the assurances given by the Solicitor General. He has told the House today in his letter to the hon. member for Nickel Belt, and he has stated on the record of the House of Commons, that those statements given by him were upon advice in his ministerial responsibility, and they are accepted as true, as they always have been in this House. Nevertheless, there may rest in the hands of the hon. member for Nickel Belt a very important question of privilege, and I need some time to reconcile these problems and to try to sort them out. I will try to come back to the House with a decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder if I might just interrupt the right hon. member for one moment. I think there are one or two ministers who have been waiting to table documents, and I wonder if, out of courtesy, we might permit them to do that and allow them to go before the right hon. member's question of privilege. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Mr. Speaker.]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

IMMIGRATION

TABLING OF 1978 REGULATIONS

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for its courtesy. Pursuant to Standing Order 41(2) I would like to table, in both official languages, the immigration regulations, 1978.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MR. DIEFENBAKER—PROCEDURE ON S.O. 43 MOTIONS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, today we have witnessed once more what has been taking place here with regularity, namely, a denial of the opportunity for hon. members to raise questions under Standing Order 43. I say at once that the individual who speaks on behalf of the government is the hon. member for Drummond (Mr. Pinard). I have watched him in action day after day and week after week. He spoke with sonorous emphasis this afternoon, but normally he speaks with bated breath. Whenever a motion which the government does not want is moved, in those subdued, sibilate tones he uses he says no, and the wishes of the House of Commons are thereby denied. I did not know until today that the hon. member had such a vociferous capacity, but one learns. I have only heard him in operation when denying the right of hon. members in this House to introduce resolutions.

Today two were introduced, one by the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) in connection with this day of days, International Women's Day. The resolution the hon. member for Egmont was asking permission to move was a reasonable one. I am not going to read it because I do not want to clutter the record, but it was reasonable. In effect it said that the Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission should immediately review each department's five-year plan of action to ensure no further erosion of the advancement of women. I thought that would be generally accepted, but the hon. member, the voice of the government, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council, said no.

Then a little later the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) endeavoured to move the following resolution:

That this House takes note of the fact that this is International Women's Day and calls on the government to act forthwith on the recommendations made recently by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women . . .

Again I am not going to read the entire resolution.

Mr. Pinard: And report within 30 days.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The hon. gentleman had an opportunity to speak, and we now learn that he has a voice. He said no. This is the type of thing which makes a farce of parliament.