

Privilege—Mr. Jourdenais

What the Prime Minister said was targeted at Parties in opposition, in a generic sense, and was not directed as a reflection on a specific Member. Some Hon. Members may feel that this is a fine line. As your Speaker, I can say with some experience that Hon. Members often come too close to the fine line in both questions and answers during Question Period. No one Party has the monopoly on walking the fine line from time to time. There is not an Hon. Member here with any experience who does not realize that that fine line can be breached either in the preambles to questions or in remarks made in answers. While it may not be unparliamentary, the experience of this place is that it makes it more difficult to maintain order. Ultimately, of course, in this place what causes disorder eventually will be ruled by someone as being unparliamentary.

However, in keeping with the decisions of my predecessors, I must rule that the statement of the Right Hon. Prime Minister did not violate our rules. There is no doubt that the statement of the Right Hon. Prime Minister was met with considerable emotional responses from both opposition Parties. Indeed, it led to the uttering of some unparliamentary language by some Hon. Members. It was clear that some Hon. Members were clearly offended by the statement of the right hon. gentleman.

• (1510)

In the first case with respect to the statement of the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), the Chair adjourned dealing with that matter for one hour, after which the Hon. Member for Oshawa returned to the Chamber and corrected his own statement out of respect for the Chair and for the dignity of this House. He did so in the finest tradition of this place.

In the latter case, that of the Hon. Member for Skeena (Mr. Fulton), the Hon. Member for Skeena expressed his unwillingness to withdraw the unparliamentary expression he had used in view of the Right Hon. Prime Minister's statement and in view of the way he took that particular statement.

The Chair then invited the Hon. Member for Skeena again on Friday, October 30, to reflect upon his position and to reflect upon the duty of the Chair and of all Hon. Members elected to this House. The House of Commons can only function properly when Hon. Members respect and abide by the rules they themselves have set down.

I know perhaps better than many Members in this place that the Hon. Member for Skeena is an effective Member of Parliament and has made a considerable contribution to British Columbia, my own province, and has represented his constituents very well indeed. I understand that the Hon. Member may have a statement to make to the House. The Hon. Member for Skeena.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I accept your interpretation of the Prime Minister's words. While Your Honour has ruled that they are not unparliamentary, you have recognized that they did deeply offend Hon. Members.

I have spent the past ten days in western Canada and have found that westerners were similarly offended by the Prime Minister's attack. The Prime Minister's remarks certainly offended me because they were intended to question the devotion and patriotism which I as a westerner and other members of my Party from throughout Canada serve western Canada. As I stated some days ago, I am a westerner, and a third generation westerner. I love and am honoured to serve Canada. But the west is my home and no Prime Minister should impute motive to those who have long and honourably served the West.

You will understand, Mr. Speaker, why I reacted with such anger to the Prime Minister's remarks. I had hoped for these past two weeks that he would apologize but he has not seen fit to do so. However, I hold this House in great respect and I support the Speaker. Therefore, I withdraw the unparliamentary words which I used.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Before leaving this matter I want to thank the Hon. Member for Skeena for making the statement that he has made.

I want to say one other thing to all Hon. Members. I wish that all Hon. Members on both sides of the House would watch the fine line. There are occasions when the preamble invites an intemperate response. There are occasions when, of course, the answer does the same. There is a fine line and I would ask Hon. Members to make every effort to try to keep it in mind.

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PRIVILEGE

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN TO LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE—MEMBER FOR LASALLE—MOTION FOR REFERENCE TO ELECTIONS, PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: On November 3, 1987 the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Jourdenais) raised a question of privilege with regard to the conduct of the Hon. Member for LaSalle (Mr. Lanthier) at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, which was held on October 7, 1987 for the purpose of electing a Chairman of the committee pursuant to Standing Orders 91 and 92.

[Translation]

I had indicated that I might come back to the House to hear further comments, but when looking at *Hansard* for that day, I found everything I needed to make a ruling on the matter today. I wish to thank the Hon. Members who took part in this procedural debate for their interventions.