

Privilege—Mr. Peterson

was supposed to have been circulated to members of METPAC. Who is METPAC? I do not know.

An Hon. Member: A Toronto Liberal organization.

Madam Speaker: I, as the Chair, have no way of finding out who these people are and why this letter has been circulated to them. This is a matter which has to be dealt with in another way than the one which is suggested by these two Hon. Members.

I would remind Hon. Members that criticisms of judges do not impair the operations of this House whereas a question of privilege would deal with the operations of this House. These particular criticisms of judges do not impair the operations of the House or obstruct Members, as a matter of fact, in their duties. They are able to perform their duties regardless of whether or not criticisms of that nature have been levelled at judges.

I have a lot of sympathy for the strong feelings which Members have about this particular situation, and they should be encouraged to pursue the matter in every possible way they feel they can pursue it, but I cannot allow them to do it under the guise of a question of privilege and, unfortunately, I have to rule that I do not find privilege in the Hon. Member's question.

I have a question of privilege from the Hon. Member for Willowdale (Mr. Peterson).

MR. PETERSON—CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF OFFICIAL
OPPOSITION

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising from today's proceedings. I feel that my privileges as a Member of Parliament to do the job for which I have been elected have been very seriously impaired by the type of conduct which I see going on today. We have already had at least five questions of privilege raised by Members of the Official Opposition. I see at least five or six other Members who are—

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member might not like what is taking place in the House at the present time. He can have opinions on whatever is taking place, but certainly that is not a question of privilege. He has risen to expose a question of privilege, but unfortunately I have to interrupt him because he does not have a question of privilege.

The Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis) on a point of order.

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, while you were delivering your judgment, the Hon. Member for Don Valley East (Mr. Smith) allowed to the House that he was a Member of METPAC, and that might be of some assistance to you.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Blais: Madam Speaker, my point of order concerns the procedure being used by the Members of the Opposition. I simply wish to point out that immediately after the oral question period, a series of questions of privilege were raised in an entirely disorderly fashion. As you know, Madam Speaker, there were at least six or seven other Members who advised the Chair that they intended to raise a question of privilege. My point or order is as follows: According to Standing Order 12 of the House of Commons, the Chair has the duty to preserve order in the House, and on page 441 of Erskine May, it says that it is the right of any Member of this House who conceives that a breach of order has been committed, to rise in his place.

With all due respect, Madam Speaker, I wish to say that after what happened when the bells started to ring yesterday afternoon, and considering the debate on the motion before the House pursuant to Standing Order 75C, and the position taken by the Opposition on motions of closure and time allocation under Standing Order 75C of the House of Commons, it is clear that the Opposition is systematically trying to create disorder in this House.

[*English*]

There are, of course, Madam Speaker, the rules of this House which have to be honoured, but beyond that there is the necessity in a democratic institution such as the Parliament of Canada that there be sound debate, and that the Orders of the Day, when they are ready to be called, ought to be called by the Chair. There ought not to be a possibility of systematic interruption by the misuse and abuse of the rules of the House by the raising of spurious questions of privilege by the Opposition. For them to do that, even though they may do that very quietly, in my view, Madam Speaker, constitutes a grave disorder that attacks the very essence of a deliberative body in a democratic society such as ours. And the Opposition, Madam Speaker, even though they think they are very bright and very smart in doing this, are discrediting the very essence of this Parliament of Canada and this House of Commons and they ought to be ashamed of themselves for doing so.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker: The Minister is absolutely correct in saying that when there is a breach of order, it is the duty of the Chair to intervene as appropriate. I do not know whether the Minister was openly or implicitly criticizing the Chair's behaviour in the circumstances, but it seems to me that this afternoon, all proceedings have taken place as prescribed by the Standing Orders. I cannot prevent Hon. Members from raising a question of privilege. I can only rule on questions of privilege. The questions are raised, and it is my duty to hear them. I try to ask Hon. Members to state their questions of privilege as quickly as possible, and especially to describe in the first few sentences what exactly their question of privilege is. That is what I have been doing all afternoon. If Hon. Members decide to raise a lot of questions of privilege, I