

Privilege—Ms. Copps

committees. That is the danger in what is happening here. If the Prime Minister's Office, with all of its resources, is going to bring in witnesses before they are even seen by Members of the committee, that will create an unfairness in the system which will guarantee that the committees will not work. I think that is a very serious breach of the procedures of this House and the intent of our committees.

Mr. Speaker: I want to be very careful here. The Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley—Hants (Mr. Nowlan).

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I am not a member of the committee but I have been a Member of the House for a few years and I am chairman of a committee. I must say, without getting into the words of the formal notice of motion of privilege, that I as a Member of the House feel my privileges, in a reverse way, have been imposed upon and insulted by such a fictitious, specious motion of privilege put forward by the opposition. Never, since this new session has begun with its new rules, have I heard more of a mountain out of a molehill made by parliamentary pigmies who are trying to pervert the new parliamentary reform process.

Mr. Murphy: Order.

Mr. Nowlan: Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if Hon. Members opposite do not have more responsibility in trying to interpret these new areas of parliamentary reform—they are only provisional rules—the sooner we get rid of them and get back to basic parliamentary order, the better it will be.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, to your credit you posed a question to the Hon. Member who just spoke which was a question I was asking myself as I listened to the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) and the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps). I do not know if the Hon. Member for Hamilton East is a lawyer, but the Hon. Member for Burnaby is a lawyer and very much a member of the Committee on Justice. To suggest that a client cannot be briefed by the lawyer without tainting his evidence as suggested by the Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata), who is also a lawyer of dubious skill, is an insult to any Parliamentarian, to any lawyer, or to anyone in the legal world—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair is not absolutely certain that to call another Hon. Member a lawyer of dubious skill would come as any surprise to the general public, but it may be creating an atmosphere in which other Hon. Members are inclined to respond in like fashion. I am reminded of what Shakespeare had one of his characters say some hundreds of years ago: "The first thing we should do is let us hang all the lawyers". I am sure the Hon. Member would not want to go that far.

Mr. Nowlan: I understand, Mr. Speaker, and you are in the chair to exercise moderation because those of us in the common field of the House sometimes do get a little excited. I used to be a member of the profession, and as far as I am

concerned it is the last of the priesthoods and the faster it is defrocked and put back in the world of reality, the better it is.

I have not participated that much in some of these points of order, and you did denote the fact that perhaps I was not as moderate as I usually am. But, I have listened to this poppycock for an hour about a private meeting, as my hon. friend from Scarborough called it, which is totally distinct from a secret meeting. This was not a secret conclave, a cabal, a meeting under the cloak of darkness under the Peace Tower or climbing into the back door of the Langevin Building to pervert evidence before the committee. This "tainted" evidence, as it is called by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East, was allegedly in documents which were changed before and after these witnesses ever appeared.

There is absolutely no question of privilege here. The Hon. House Leader for the Official Opposition, who has come through an awful traumatic weekend trying to find out where he fits on the spectrum of free trade, or on any subject, let alone as leader, can be excused for his participation this afternoon. He is a notable Member of this House and I think a Member of some repute of the bar society of the land. For him to say that certain things said by the Hon. Member for Scarborough East (Mr. Hicks) lead *ipso facto* to an automatic question of privilege is one of the most facetious and superficial arguments that has ever been presented in this Chamber. Unless the tone and logic of debate starts to pick up, Mr. Speaker, you might as well turn off the cameras completely because the people of Canada will be turned off completely.

● (1600)

Let us get back to the business of the House, which is an interesting motion dealing with the Post Office. Evidentially, members of the New Democratic Party want to filibuster on an opposition day. I used to be in opposition and when we had an opposition day we treated it as the holy of holies because we were serious about the subject. Yet this opposition—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member's intervention has been helpful. I think it is probably appropriate to ask Hon. Members if any can constrain themselves from entering into the debate. I now recognize the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper).

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to relate to you an experience we had at our committee with regarding an Order in Council appointment. I think it touches on what you will be dealing with in terms of this question of privilege. While the Chair may rule that the contact between the Prime Minister's office and the witness before he appeared before committee was a breach of privilege, Your Honour might also rule that the outcome of such a contact had an impact on the effectiveness of the committee to do its job.

It is with regard to the second point that I wish to comment. A Mr. Spector, who is now a senior civil servant, appeared before our committee. He was previously assistant to the