

Governor General tomorrow, and not by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau.) The Prime Minister this afternoon, in replying to this question of privilege said that for the last week or ten days members of parliament vis-à-vis the problem in the province of Quebec had kept their silence. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we kept out silence.

● (1530)

[Translation]

I represent in the House of Commons a Quebec constituency whose electors are 75 per cent French speaking and 25 per cent English speaking. I have remained silent because I do not wish to make a political issue of the matter.

[English]

If, as the Prime Minister suggested, I and many of us on this side of the House have kept our silence, it is because we realize that questions of national unity, the question of keeping the Canadian federation together, should not be plunged into the political arena. I resent what the Prime Minister said in the House this afternoon.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Graffey: If ever the Prime Minister needs bipartisan co-operation from all sides of the House, it is now. Keeping the Canadian union together does not mean there will only be a Liberal response, a Progressive Conservative, an NDP response or a Social Credit response. Before I sit down, I want to say if members on this side of the House are excited it is because of the frequent times we have heard the Prime Minister say, on the vital question of national unity and of keeping this country together, that the only party that is indispensable is the Liberal party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I simply want to remind the hon. member, before concluding the discussion, that the hon. member is not debating the motion as a question of privilege, but the only subject for discussion at the moment is, as I have said before, that of privilege. If privilege exists, it would pre-empt any other business and would cause the Chair to put the question which ordinarily would not be put except on a substantive motion. The hon. member is clearly debating the merits of the motion as to whether or not the Prime Minister's statement should be made on television. The only relevant question here is whether or not the privileges of the House are offended, and I must ask the hon. member to keep to that question.

Mr. Graffey: In terminating, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Graffey:—I would simply say that I concur with the leader of the NDP and other speakers on this side of the House that on a question of national unity, a question which is of vital interest to everyone in the House—there are no precedents for this, since we are talking about the continuation

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

of the Canadian family—surely the Prime Minister should be informed by every member of the House, be he Liberal, Progressive Conservative, member of the NDP or of the Social Credit party: this question should not be put into the political arena.

I know you warned me on this question, Mr. Speaker, but we on this side of the House are rising this afternoon for one reason, namely, that up until now, the Prime Minister has played politics with national unity and we do not expect him to change tomorrow night: that is why we feel he should be made to make the statement in the House, before the elected representatives of the people, before he speaks on national television.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has made a contribution to this discussion.

An hon. Member: Then he left the chamber.

Mr. Speaker: We have tried repeatedly to return to the narrow confines of the procedural matter before us. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) gave the Chair notice, pursuant to the Standing Order, of his intention to raise this matter as a question of privilege. That gave the Chair the opportunity to examine the relevant precedents. The precedent to which I have referred, and I will read it to the House, is a ruling given by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux on October 30, 1969. At the conclusion of Mr. Speaker's ruling, he said:

The question has often been raised whether parliamentary privilege imposes on ministers an obligation to deliver ministerial statements and to make announcements and communications to the public through the House of Commons or to make these announcements or statements in the House rather than outside the chamber. The question has been asked whether hon. members are entitled, as part of their parliamentary privilege, to receive such information ahead of the general public. I can find no precedent to justify this suggestion. Hon. members will remember that there was an interesting and somewhat protracted debate on a question of privilege raised in the last session by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). The arguments which were advanced at the time were studied closely and the precedents were discussed in a ruling of the Chair reported at page 869 of *Votes and Proceedings* of March 31, 1969. The precedents which were quoted at that time are in my view applicable to the circumstances outlined by the hon. member for Hillsborough. There may be, in such circumstances, a question of propriety or a question of courtesy.

I stress those last words. The arguments put forward today constantly referred to whether or not it was proper for the Prime Minister to make a statement on such an important matter outside the House instead of in it, whether he was being discourteous or arrogant, and whether he was disregarding the rights and the importance of parliament. That is not the question as referred to in the precedent. The question is whether there is a requirement inherent in the privileges of members of the House, individually or collectively, that statements of this nature be made in the House before they are made to the general public. That matter was considered rather fully by the previous Speaker on the occasion to which I have just referred. If hon. members wish to pursue that and examine the precedent to which Mr. Speaker Lamoureux alluded, there is an even more amplified discussion of exactly the same arguments that were put forward here today.