

Privilege

The hon. member for Mégantic—Compton—Stansstead rose just a few minutes ago on a question of privilege. That is what I am hearing. As I understand the argument, he takes offence to something somebody else has said and feels that his privileges have been breached. I have been listening to the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond in reply. That is where we are at the moment. I thank the hon. member for giving me an opportunity to clarify the matter.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is my contention that there is no breach of privilege. The member has not established a prima facie case. I find it rather peculiar that in public statements in the newspapers, they portray a particular oath, if you will, or allegiance to the Province of Quebec. Now when someone questions their oath with regard to allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, they wish to take issue with that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there is any point of privilege whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I have received a considerable number of letters, and I am sure you have, on the subject of the oath of allegiance that each member is required to swear before taking his or her seat in the House of Commons. At some point, Sir, you will be called upon—and presumably this is the time, given the hon. member's point of privilege—for you to rule on what it means. What exactly does the oath of allegiance mean?

A member of this House was elected as a Bloc Québécois member. He was quoted as saying in the press that the oath of allegiance that we swear was a mere technicality.

A ceremony took place in the city of Hull several weeks ago where the hon. member said to Canadians from one end of the country to another that he was washing his hands of the oath of allegiance that he swore, that each and every one of us swore, to the Queen of Canada and that his allegiance was to the Province of Quebec. That is fair enough.

Mr. Speaker, you will be required at some point to determine whether some hon. members in this House breached that particular oath of allegiance. If it is a mere technicality, then it has to be clearly specified in a ruling of the Chair. I believe that our oath of allegiance is more than a mere technicality. We are pledging allegiance to Canada. I would ask you, Sir, to rule that our responsibility as federal members of Parliament is to be loyal to Canada, loyal to a strong and united country.

• (1550)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has risen on a question of privilege. He was really rising on a point of order. I may or may not have to deal with that now or at some other time. Of course I can always hear that matter if it is required.

At the moment I have a simple, direct issue arising from the exchange. The hon. member has said that what was said by another hon. member is a breach of his privileges. I will consider that. I will look carefully at the "blues" and I will come back to the House.

On the other issue of the oath, it may well be that that matter could come in front of the Speaker. It may not be appropriate for the Speaker to rule on that but certainly I cannot deal with that on this particular point of privilege. I have to deal with that as I have heard it.

The hon. member for York South—Weston on a point of privilege.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I will put the question right now. I will raise it as a personal point of privilege, asking you as the Speaker of the House of Commons—

Mr. Speaker: I know what the hon. member wishes to do but I would ask him to give me written notice as he would ordinarily do, because I am also bound by the rules. I take it I will be expecting to have written notice from the hon. member.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

COMMENTS ALLEGEDLY MADE BY MEMBER FOR
HAMILTON EAST

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I too rise on a question of privilege which does not relate to that raised by my colleagues earlier today. I do so with some hesitation because I know you have already dealt