

Privilege—Mr. Stanfield

Some hon. Members: Weeks?

Mr. Chrétien:—a maximum of couple of a weeks, to be able to table the bill. So far as the other bill is concerned, I will be discussing it with the House leader and will bring it in as quickly as possible.

Mr. Clark: It raises some intriguing questions as to why a bill, on which the policy has already been decided, which has been drafted and translated, will take a matter of weeks to get through the cabinet, although with this cabinet I can understand that it takes the simplest thing a long time to get through.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1502)

Mr. Clark: So that the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs might not be denied an opportunity, even if the entire House is denied an opportunity to deal with economic policy, would the minister be prepared to make an immediate reference of the annual economic review of his department to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I will follow the usual procedure about those things. I will be appearing before the committee of the House on Thursday afternoon, at which time hon. members of the opposition can ask me questions. Also, I have agreed to be present at another meeting next week or the week after; I do not know. I am accepting the invitation of the committee. If they want more work in front of them, certainly I am able to send some more over to them.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. STANFIELD—SURVEILLANCE OF CANDIDATES SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On Friday I indicated some preliminary reasons for disposing of the motion originally put by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield). Also I made some remarks about the basic nature of the subject raised in the motion. I believe the hon. member for Halifax is ready to make further representations.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to follow the discussion in the House on Friday, particularly relating to the question of privilege which I raised originally last Wednesday. At that time I indicated I would be prepared to bring a motion on Thursday, which I did. On Friday there was a discussion concerning that motion, at which time Your Honour expressed some views.

On Friday Your Honour indicated that the motion I presented could not be regarded as being in order. At least that was your disposition at that time. It could not be considered in order, because on Friday the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais)

denied that he took the position the McDonald commission was the only appropriate place for this question to be dealt with, rather than the House. Your Honour indicated that this had become a question of fact, and still remained a question on that point, and could not be regarded as a question of privilege. Certainly I do not quarrel with Your Honour's ruling in that regard.

When I raised the question of privilege on Wednesday, it seemed to me that the Solicitor General was taking the exact position of which I had accused him. On that point, I am content he backed away from that position. On Friday in the House he indicated quite explicitly that he was not standing by that position. He was not contending that the House was not entitled to information. Indeed, he put some information before the House. He was not contending that the McDonald commission was the only appropriate place for this question to be considered. I am happy the Solicitor General departed from the very hard line which he took on last Wednesday, when I raised my question of privilege.

As the matter now stands, in the minister's judgment and the judgment of everyone else it is very clear the House is not precluded from inquiring into this type of question on the grounds it is a security matter, when in fact it touches upon some very fundamental rights and concerns of members of parliament. I take it that is now settled.

As reported at page 4977 of *Hansard* dated April 28, 1978, Your Honour indicated the following:

The difficulty for the Chair is that that procedural problem does not set aside the basic problem that rests at the core of this matter, which may now come to light, or it may not, I do not know. However, the contributions that have been made now indicate that there may be some regime in existence which may be offensive to members and which they may want to put in the form of some motion.

Your Honour indicated that my motion would have to be set aside on procedural grounds.

Following an intervention by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), Your Honour is reported as saying the following:

The only other step that I had in mind would be to set aside this particular motion on procedural grounds, without prejudice to the right of the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield), or for that matter to any other member, to reintroduce a motion on the same subject. I do not have to take that step now, however, but I wanted to indicate my thinking on it.

The discussion was suspended until today by Your Honour. If it is believed that there is in fact a *prima facie* case, I would be prepared to move:

That the matter of the surveillance by the security forces of candidates at general elections be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in order that the committee can determine and report upon the extent of and criteria for such surveillance.

In other words, while the Solicitor General and others have eased our concerns in some respects, still those concerns are very fundamental. I am not referring to the refusal of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to tell the House clearly what the instructions of the government were to the security forces following the invocation of the War Measures Act, at which time the government asked the security forces to give more