

Privilege—Miss Bégin

Mr. Cafik: Now to the second point, Mr. Speaker. As reported at page 489 of *Hansard*, another hon. member said:

We are trying to protect them—

Meaning the RCMP.

—from the machinations and manipulations of a vested interest within the Liberal government to use them for private interests within that government. That police force has been manipulated by this government in order to shore up and create a scaffolding for a doddering, decadent Bourassa government.

That is directly from *Hansard*. It is an absolutely clear and specific charge. In both cases, a very important point has been made as to why we did not stand up. I stood up in the case of the hon. member for St. John's West immediately following that statement and asked him to lay a specific charge. He indicated he was going to make a number of specific charges later in his speech, but from my reading of it he became less specific rather than more specific because he felt his seat might be on the line if he went any further.

I would simply say that if, in the mind of the hon. member for St. John's West, he made the statement he did because he had heard nothing to persuade him otherwise, and if that is good enough for the opposition, it certainly ought to be good enough for any hon. member on this side of the House. In my view, Mr. Speaker, if a question of privilege is found, with respect, to be consistent, we ought to ask all members to withdraw that kind of absolutely irresponsible allegation of a very specific nature.

● (1602)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I thank all hon. members who have made such spirited and vigorous contributions to this interesting and very challenging question.

The question remains one of whether, in the totality of his remarks complained of, the Prime Minister had in fact gone beyond the privileges of the House. I will have to examine the details of the arguments and examine, again, the precedents. I have tried to develop some precedents with regard to accusations of a general, as opposed to a specific, nature. The bulk of the precedents, I must say, relate more to the insistence of a member who is under accusation having the right to be specifically charged before the matter is drawn off to some committee for an expedition and research on whether or not guilt or innocence prevails. Those precedents are not at all helpful in the situation.

The reverse is complained of here. A charge of a general nature is, in fact, the equivalent of a charge of a specific nature. I have to decide whether there is any precedent that can assist me in that question, and they are difficult to find. In any case, I will take under consideration and careful advisement the arguments that were made today, and examine the precedents carefully in an attempt to rule tomorrow, if I can, or at the earliest possible opportunity after proper study.

I indicated that there was another matter outstanding. The hon. member for St. John's East raised earlier two questions of order relating to references allegedly made in this argument by the Solicitor General and the Prime Minister in earlier discussions concerning documents, in which he was establishing the

[Mr. Cafik.]

point that according to the practices of the House, the documents had in fact been cited within the terms of the precedents and therefore ought to have been laid upon the table by both those ministers. Does the hon. member for St. John's East have anything further to add?

Mr. McGrath: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what you want to do on this, but I understand the documents are public documents. They have been tabled in the commission holding hearings in Montreal. Since they are public documents, I would have no objection to tabling them. However, I wonder if the rule calls for tabling documents which are already in the public domain.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, it was never identified. I do not know what the Prime Minister was quoting from. It was setting a very dangerous precedent which I did not want the House to follow. Therefore, I think we should stick to the practices of the House.

Mr. Trudeau: With respect, Mr. Speaker, that is not correct. I was quoting a document which was mentioned in a question by the leader of the New Democratic Party. I just said I would ask a question about it.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): How would we know it?

Mr. Trudeau: You just have to listen to the question and you will know it.

Mr. Speaker: I had examined briefly, in preparation for this discussion today, the two incidents referred to by the hon. member for St. John's East. Without further argument, it was my impression that within the terms of our precedents the reference to documents by the Solicitor General fell short of a citation of the document and, therefore, no ruling of the Chair would apply.

With regard to the reference made by the Prime Minister, it seemed to me from reading his remarks that he had, in fact, made either sufficient reference to the contents of the document or a quotation from it. It was not clear from *Hansard* whether he was in fact quoting from a document. The Prime Minister has now confirmed that he was quoting from a document, or referring to it, and in fact it is a public document.

Obviously, if it is a public document it is available to be tabled and available to members without prejudice to the public good. Perhaps I might be permitted in the circumstances, since it is a public document, to take some time to examine the propriety of ordering a document like that tabled, and perhaps report to the House tomorrow.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the document which you and the Prime Minister just referred to, I understand it is the affidavit that is signed by the Solicitor General. That is certainly the one from which I was quoting. It was written earlier this month. I would like to find out from the