

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):—whether the hon. member for Oshawa is changing his position and is about to support the government, if and when we ever get to the question of closure imposed by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard).

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I trust my colleague will not be offended, but I will speak in the language with which I am more familiar. He has spent an hour and a half today systematically destroying and demolishing this noble institution by taxing your patience and raising a question of privilege which was totally unfounded. I have the right to speak French here and I will do so freely. If you want to shout—Madam Speaker, it seems to me it would be normal—

[*English*]

Mr. Clark: I rise on a question of privilege, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Let us be clear about what is going on. The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) now has the floor and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) is asking for the floor on a question of privilege. We cannot have two questions of privilege at the same time. If he wants to raise a point of order, that is another matter.

Mr. Clark: I will do that, Madam Speaker. The point of order is very clear. One of the matters that has been respected—

Some hon. Members: Order.

● (1500)

Mr. Rose: There can be only one point of order at a time.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I was somewhat confused. The hon. President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) was on a point of order, so we must let the hon. minister finish his point of order.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): We must observe the rules.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pinard: That being said, Madam Speaker, if the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House can afford the shameful luxury of undermining this institution during an hour and a half, I wonder why the leader of a party, in this instance the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent), should be prevented from trying to defend this institution and to inject a little more dignity into the proceedings of the House since the beginning of the week. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I think that the Leader of the New Democratic Party has every right to speak during at least ten minutes and demonstrate to you that perhaps he does have a prima facie question of privilege, whereas the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party (Mr. Baker) has taken an hour and a half to—

An hon. Member:—to say nothing!

Mr. Pinard:—systematically run down this institution and put your credibility on trial.

[*English*]

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. I am sure this matter can be very quickly resolved.

[*Translation*]

—because I am convinced that perhaps the House Leader of the Government said something that he did not mean at a time when he was perhaps a bit angry. He accused members on this side of having objected to his speaking in French. This is what he said. And I believe that someone on the other side said that it was true that the members of the Progressive Conservative Party are against the use of French in this House. I am referring to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Ostiguy), if I am not mistaken.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we have touched on a matter which could cause real problems for the House of Commons and the country. All my life, I have tried to defend the right of Canadians to use both official languages throughout Canada.

Madam Speaker, I can accept accusations and I can accept that, from time to time, even the most peaceful of members can lose their temper. That is a fact! However, when an accusation such as that is made not by an ordinary member but by the government House leader, I believe that it must have been a mistake and that it should be withdrawn. I believe that this creates a really serious situation for the House.

The minister said that he greatly respects the House, and I accept this statement. He has shown since his election to this House that he has a lot of respect for both official languages, and I think that he will accept the fact that I have also shown a lot of respect for both official languages in this House and for the fact that a member can use either one in the House. The minister made an accusation which was supported by some of the members of his own party. I believe that it is essential to have the minister immediately withdraw his accusation, because otherwise, there will be a really unhealthy atmosphere in the House, an atmosphere that no one wants to have.

[*English*]

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I think the Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) understood nothing. All I said is that I had the right to speak French, and members on the other side started to shout and heckle me.

I reiterate and repeat that I have the right to speak French, as the hon. member has the right to speak English. So, he understood absolutely nothing. I think he is just threatening and blackmailing us when he says that the atmosphere of the House will be worse just because I stated my right to speak French in the House. I think he is just wishing that it does not go so well in this place, as has been the case for the last many days.