

his question of privilege, it is based on two separate points. One was the transfer of six inmates out of Millhaven on the eve of the visit of the parliamentary committee, and the second leg of his question of privilege concerned the evidence that was given to the committee by the parole officers on Monday evening in the Kingston area.

With regard to the first point, I was trying to indicate to the Chair the situation at Millhaven. It is tense. As the Chair may or may not know, the inmates are privy to television sets and information that is available to the general public. One must understand that the inmates are in their cells for 23 hours a day. They are watching the news and understand what is going on in the United States with the uprising in the two institutions there. They are aware of the work of the committee.

Six inmates were moved. On Monday morning, while we were at Collins Bay, the Member for Burnaby insisted that Mr. Avrey, whom we were told was a member of the inmate committee at Millhaven, be moved back to Millhaven, together with the others, in order to meet with the committee.

Mr. Robinson: On a point of order.

● (1550)

Mr. Speaker: Before I hear the Hon. Member for Burnaby on a point of order, I should perhaps make some comment here. I will, of course, hear the Hon. Member for Burnaby, but I say to the Hon. Member for York South—Weston that, perhaps after the Hon. Member for Burnaby has raised his point of order, the Chair needs to know whether the Hon. Member for York South—Weston is supporting the position the Hon. Member for Burnaby has taken or is rising to indicate that in the opinion of the Hon. Member for York South—Weston there is not a point of privilege here. That is the point in respect to which I think I am called upon to keep the debate.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I just wanted to suggest, with respect, precisely the same thing. There are two fundamental issues; the first is the question of the transfer of Mr. Avery, a member of the inmate committee, and the disappearance of his documents, and the second is with respect to the alleged interference with senior supervisors and suggestions with respect to their careers.

At no time did I suggest that all six of those who had been transferred be sent back to Millhaven. I certainly did ask that Mr. Avery, as a member of the inmates committee, be transferred back. I would hope the Hon. Member in recounting events, if they are to be relevant, at least would be accurate as well.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure all Hon. Members try very hard to be accurate and to the degree they succeed, the Chair is, of course, assisted.

Perhaps it is appropriate now for the Chair to respond partially to what I have heard. I will hear the Hon. Member

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for York South—Weston, but, as I understand it, it is the intention of the Hon. Member for Burnaby that I consider whether or not two events that happened; first, the moving of one prisoner prior to the arrival of the committee and the apparent alleged disappearance of some documents; and, second, a further situation which the Hon. Member for Burnaby said took place in which he alleges there was some kind of pressure or interference by officials with those with whom the committee was meeting as people to give evidence about their duties and responsibilities and the work they were doing, constitute a question of privilege.

As I understand it, the combination of those alleged facts amounts, in the words of the Hon. Member for Burnaby, to a question of privilege because it was a deliberate attempt—that is the position of the Hon. Member—to keep the committee from getting information the committee indeed ought to have had. If I have misunderstood in any way the Hon. Member's position, then I am sure he will correct me, but it seems to me that that is the issue. I would ask Hon. Members when they rise to give me their help and confine themselves to that issue and resist any temptation to wander very far away from it, although hopefully most of the time we try to follow a bit of common sense, and it is impossible to discuss something like this without knowing a little of the background. The Hon. Member for York South—Weston has assisted the Chair in that. I do not think there is any need to go any further. I will hear the Hon. Member for York South—Weston and I hope he will keep in mind what I have just said.

Mr. Nunziata: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the morning at Collins Bay Penitentiary we met with officials from the Correctional Service of Canada, in particular, those responsible for security at Millhaven Penitentiary. They confirmed in fact that the six inmates, including Mr. Avery, were moved. They also indicated to the committee that from a security perspective, it was not appropriate to move the inmates back. At that particular point in time I questioned the reasons the inmates were moved in the first place. I also pointed out to the committee that, having made that decision to move the inmates from Millhaven to Kingston, it was not within the jurisdiction of the committee to overrule the security staff and insist that these inmates, whether all six of them or Mr. Avery himself, be moved back to the institution.

They advised us if that were to occur, although it was physically possible to move these inmates and Mr. Avery back, it would not, from a security perspective, be a wise move.

On behalf of the Official Opposition I took the position that we ought to defer to the security people, to the Correctional Service of Canada. If something went wrong, I, as a member of the committee, did not want to be held responsible for overruling the advice of the security people. The security people advised us at that point in time—this is the Monday morning at Collins Bay—that an attempt would be made to hook up Mr. Avery by way of a telephone conference call with the inmate committee and the Standing Committee on Justice