

Privilege—Mr. Baldwin

have in my possession and which was given to me through your assistants and was used for that translation, Mr. Speaker.

What I am asking is that we be given the chance to study the original version of the comments made by the learned judge so that we can, in an enlightened way, basing ourselves on the original text, comment on a topic that is very serious in my opinion. I am not asking that the debate be postponed indefinitely. I am asking for a short postponement, possibly until tomorrow at the least, to allow those who want to see the original statement to get a copy that is legible and understandable and can be understood and then discuss the matter advisedly. My request is therefore that I at least might be allowed to come back to the subject at the earliest opportunity, but that I be given a legible copy of the French original of the statement made by the learned judge.

● (1612)

[English]

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, on the very day that statement made by the judge came to my attention, we got in touch with his office. An undertaking was given by his office that a letter would be sent by special delivery. It should have reached my office the next day, according to their calculations.

An hon. Member: They don't know the Post Office the way we do.

Mr. Baldwin: I say this with due respect, Mr. Speaker. That document did not reach my office, has not reached my office, and I do not know whether it ever will. My instructions were that it was a special delivery letter containing a copy of the comments of the chief judge and it would be in my possession immediately. That has not happened. I did all I could, and I was only able to obtain the same kind of barely legible copy as the hon. member, from a member of the press gallery who got it from the office of the clerk in Montreal.

I had people in our organization who are good at this, and who are reputable, make as careful and detailed a copy as possible under the circumstances. I would have preferred the other way, but I was put in this impossible position. Now I understand that the chief judge departed yesterday for Greece for two or three weeks, and so we may not be able to get another copy as he is not available.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The parliamentary secretary has requested that he be given some time to examine the text. I think that is a reasonable request. In any event, I would intend to take some time for study of the matters I have to decide, so there certainly will be an opportunity for him to examine the text. If he seeks an opportunity to make an intervention as the result of that study, I certainly think the House ought to accord it to him.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I suppose we could ask the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) if we have extradition privileges with Greece!

[Mr. Pinard.]

Many of the people who spoke today have commented on the wording, the legality, the lawyer's position in terms of this privilege. I think consideration should also be given to those of us who are not lawyers and who may not know the niceties of the law and so may be intimidated.

I am very pleased that the hon. member for Peace River brought this forth. He is one of the most honourable members of this House. He is certainly one of those dedicated to law in a very general sense, and to law as it specifically affects parliament.

I think it reflects badly on some members of this House that they have continually neglected to take full advantage of the suggestions of Your Honour with regard to solving some of the problems of the House. As I understand it, Your Honour made the suggestion today on behalf of all members—without making the decision whether or not the judge was in contempt of parliament and whether he had in fact intimidated a member of parliament to a point where he could not conduct his business—of an alternative course that would allow this matter to be discussed, and might eliminate the threat that would be inherent in a very definite decision of the House in finding there was a prima facie case of intimidation.

I would question the legalistic ability of some members who participated, and would certainly question their ability in other senses in making this argument, who have disagreed with you for, I think, partisan and very selfish reasons. It is not the first time. We had a situation of a similar nature not too long ago.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but I think we ought to be careful here. What I asked the House to do was—while other contributions were being made, and while I had the matter under reserve—to consider whether a reference to the Standing Committee on Rights and Immunities of Members might be a matter of consent. That is a departure for the Chair to take at the beginning of a procedural discussion. I would not want that to be taken as a suggestion that it be done. That is unfair. What I did was to say that it ought to be considered.

There may be all kinds of reasons why people want to take positions, but I think we should be careful to say that the Chair put forward a matter that might be considered on this occasion or any other occasion. I would not want it to be said that I simply observed to the House that the matter might be resolved that way, that in fact it was the way that I preferred or that I suggested. That puts too strong an interpretation on what I was endeavouring to do. I thought that while contributions were being made, and while I had it under reserve, members might want to discuss the possibility of an agreed reference. I do not want that to be taken as a suggestion that I would prefer it that way, however. In fact, if the matter rests with me officially and I have to make a decision on the grounds of privilege, I am quite happy to do so.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I listened to your suggestion and found it to be excellent. I accepted it, as I think many members did, and I think there would have been agreement. I have no legal training, but not long ago I received a letter from