

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

very high regard for his participation in debates of a procedural nature. However, every time he opened his mouth yesterday, he was doing so for the purpose of placing yet another restriction on members, yet another gag on members of parliament.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) raised a point of order last night with regard to the words used by the President of Privy Council. During the debate today the President of Privy Council rose and tried to recoup some of that ground. There is no doubt that he was annoyed yesterday when Mr. Speaker found a prima facie case of privilege. He was annoyed that he had not received a copy of the motion. Obviously he was manifestly annoyed. He said in that debate—and so that hon. members do not forget who was the first person to reflect on the Chair, I will quote from page 1863 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a motion that obviously was well prepared beforehand and which obviously was in the hands of the official opposition for some time, having prepared it in consultation with the Chair.

I am informed that is not true at all. That motion was not prepared in consultation with the Chair but was prepared in consultation with the Table and the officers of the House. There is a big distinction between the two. He went on to say:

I regret that on a matter of this importance the motion itself was suddenly sprung upon us,—

What liability do members have—and I have raised several questions of privilege in this House in years past—to inform the government that we are going to be raising a question of privilege? None at all. They would like to have us operate as puppets, but that is not how we operate. He went on to say:

—and that we were not given any opportunity to consider the terms of the motion prior to its being put before us,—

Here were the damaging words:

—obviously on a prearranged basis.

He was accusing the Chair in no uncertain terms of collaboration, to use the word that was used by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre last night. The Chair had nothing to do with the preparation of that motion. That was a very crass accusation to be made by the President of Privy Council. He really should apologize for it. However, it will not do any good because, in my view, the Speaker has a very fine judicial mind. After extreme care in exercising his discretion yesterday, he came to the conclusion that there was a prima facie case of privilege that has to be considered here.

What those opposite are saying is: “Your opinion is worth naught, Mr. Speaker. We do not agree with you that there is any case of privilege here. We are not going to allow it to be investigated. We are not going to allow it to be sent to committee. We are not going to hear anything from any witnesses. Our minds are made up. We are going to vote against the motion and you with your reputation as a very fine legal mind can go down the tube with it.”

That is the position those opposite are taking. Then they draw the red herring across the trail of a parallel inquiry. I am

[Mr. Nielsen.]

glad to see the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council in his place.

Mr. Pinard: As usual.

Mr. Nielsen: He has the audacity to suggest that this question of privilege should not be discussed in a parliamentary committee but should be decided by Mr. Justice McDonald and his commission.

Mr. Pinard: You don't understand.

Mr. Nielsen: I not only heard the parliamentary secretary say that, but I read it again today. That is what the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi and the President of Privy Council have been saying. What a travesty of the parliamentary process! What could more clearly illustrate the complete lack of understanding of what this place is all about than that kind of a statement from the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Privy Council? We do not want a parallel inquiry. What we want, as the motion describes it, is a reference to the standing committee which usually considers matters of this nature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

● (2052)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, your arguments and those put forth by most hon. members who have already spoken are quite convincing. This is clearly a motion which deserves the support of most if not all hon. members. This opportunity hon. members have to demonstrate real and sincere eagerness to straighten up our political ways should have precedence over any other consideration. For we must agree that unfortunately most of our so-called democratic governments are democratic only in names. Sometimes our leaders, under the cover of democracy, administer and govern in a way that would shock our people, if only they were aware of what is going on.

Without presuming what results such an investigation could have, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there has been too much mystery about things whose consequences are too serious to allow us to dismiss them lightly without scrutinizing them so as to show once and for all, as I said earlier, that this government can offer the population something positive rather than the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I recall that in 1969, the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts heard the evidence of municipal authorities from the city of Montreal who stated that they were aware of a great number of subversive activities not only in the metropolitan area of Montreal, but also elsewhere in Quebec, and that they did not understand why nothing was being done to stop these activities after they had told the police and government authorities about them.