

Privilege—Ms. Copps

three individuals prior to the decision to bail out the bank, and prior to the decision to close the banks down, be available to Mr. Justice Estey for the purposes of conducting his Commission of Inquiry?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Why do we not allow Mr. Justice Estey to determine what information he deemes necessary for the proper conduct of his inquiry, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Broadbent: He has to operate with your instructions.

Mr. Deans: Why don't you give us the answer?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

CLERK OF PETITIONS' REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Friday, September 27, 1985, meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

DRAFT DOCUMENT—TASK FORCE ON FREE TRADE—RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: I should indicate that I am, contrary to what I thought earlier, in a position to rule on the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) on September 24.

Her complaint was based on a document, a copy of which she furnished to me and which I have read very carefully. It is an unidentified document of unknown authorship which purports to advise on the strategy to be employed in communicating with the public on the bilateral trade initiative between Canada and the United States.

The Hon. Member for Hamilton East complains that certain passages of this document violate her privileges as a Member of Parliament. It is not for the Chair to determine whether or not this is so, but only to decide whether sufficient evidence has been presented to justify according priority of debate to this matter.

In the first place, the Hon. Member's complaint does not seem to be directed against any identifiable individual organization. The Chair has no information as to who wrote the document or who issued it.

Second, the Chair must determine whether the document provides evidence of interference with her right to freedom of speech or whether it in any way obstructs her in the fulfilment of her duties.

She is mentioned by name in the document where it is indicated that her riding has the steel industry to represent. This is a statement of fact which is not, in itself, defamatory.

The document also suggests that some Opposition Members, including the Hon. Member for Hamilton East, represent ridings which stand to benefit from the trade initiative and that this could be productively exploited as part of the proposed strategy.

The Hon. Member perhaps, and I presume clearly, does regard this suggestion as offensive, but does it constitute a threat or an attempt to intimidate her? Has it impeded the Hon. Member in any way in the performance of her duties? I have to say that I can find no evidence in this document which would substantiate an affirmative answer to those questions. I am, therefore, unable to accord this matter precedence over other business.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

NORTHLAND BANK

TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THE LIQUIDATION OF THE NORTHLAND BANK

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 46(2), I have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, copies of correspondence relating to the liquidation of the Northland Bank.

* * *

BANKS AND BANKING

NORTHLAND BANK LIQUIDATION—STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I announced on behalf of the Government that a court order is being sought today under the Winding Up Act to permit the liquidation of the Northland Bank.

Also this morning, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) announced that Mr. Justice Willard Estey has been appointed to inquire into and report upon all circumstances and factors that contributed to the condition of the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank and resulted in their cessation of operations.

I want this afternoon to explain to the House the circumstances leading up to and the reasons for these decisions.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to point out that the problems experienced by the Canadian Commercial Bank and the Northland Bank reflect a unique and specific situation.