

that cabinet action may make it impossible for it to carry out its responsibilities.

I find the reaction of hon. members opposite astonishing, for I consider this one of the most important, significant questions parliament has considered in the last several years. The question is, how are we to act in this House, and what protection does this country's press have against the possibility of intimidation by cabinet ministers?

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I shall address myself to several aspects of the matter before you. I suggest that the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) raised not only the question concerning the conduct of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang); he raised in this House what appears to be a whole series of courses of conduct on the part of members of the government. He suggested that if Your Honour found a *prima facie* case of privilege, he would move the following motion:

That the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections inquire into the statement alleged to have been made by the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont, which appear in today's edition of the *Globe and Mail*, and into related or other incidents, which indicate that the rights of parliament on behalf of the people to have full and unabridged reporting of the actions of government are being threatened.

● (1550)

I do not stand to make a charge against anyone. I do stand to put certain facts and circumstances before this House which I think should be considered by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. I first want to address myself to the question involving the Minister of Transport. There is no question that the Minister of Transport has the right to take legal action against anyone for defamation, as we all do. No one questions that. However, that is not the issue. The issue is that through behind-the-scenes means, because of his position as a cabinet minister he was able to stop publication in a certain province of an issue of the *Canadian* magazine. If I objected to the publication of some article about me, because I am an opposition member and not a member of the government there would be no way I could stop publication of that article anywhere in Canada. They would pay no attention to me.

What would have happened had I gone to the Minister of Transport and told him that they were going to publish an article about me in which I was going to be slandered, libelled, called terrible things, calling me stupid and saying other things about me? If I asked the minister to stop publication of that article and to threaten on my behalf, would he do it? Not likely. The minister used his position as a minister of the Crown. Because he is a powerful minister he was able to get the publication stopped in Saskatchewan. That is the issue.

We can sue for libel and slander. I have never bothered and I never will, because I know it is useless for a politician unless it is something so horrendous that I would have no choice, a "live or die" matter where it had to go into the courts. I have had things written about me ten times worse than what appeared in that article. I am dumbfounded that the minister

is so thin-skinned. It is the position of the minister that makes his course of action so distasteful.

I am not laying my seat on the line. I will lay my seat on the line at the time of the next election. The people of St. John's West will decide on my conduct at that time. However, I am not laying it on the line for the Minister of Transport or the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen). The President of the Privy Council said that we are asking for an investigation of a member. We are asking for no such thing. We are asking that the Standing Committee of Privileges and Elections consider certain facts, to establish them and, once established, to decide whether the privileges of this House have been infringed because of an attempt to interfere with the free publication of stories about members of the House by members of the media. We are asking for facts to be ascertained and a decision made as to whether this is a breach of our privileges.

Another matter arises out of this motion. The other matter was already mentioned. This is a pattern of conduct by the government. It falls into line with the investigation which the CRTC was requested to make into Radio Canada with regard to alleged separatist bias. This is all part of a pattern of conduct of an arrogant, power-mad government that is going to stop anyone critical of them if they can do it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: There is a third matter which I wish to place before the House. It is related to other incidents which should be considered by this House. I refer to the question of whether it is proper for a member of the government to own, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson) has done since 1968, 49 per cent of the shares of a second television and radio channel in the province of Newfoundland. I want to put that before the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. I am not charging that that hon. gentleman has done anything improper or attempted to use any improper influence. However, I submit that it is not proper for a minister of the Crown in the government which appoints the members to the Canadian Radio Television Commission under section 5 of the act. It not only appoints the members to a seven-year term, and they can be reappointed, but decides under section 7 what pay they are to get.

Should a member of the government who has that power also be involved in ownership of a communications media in this country? I submit that is a question that has to be considered by this House—whether that is a proper situation for a minister of the Crown. The hon. gentleman in question has been a member of the government since 1968. It has been nine years since that situation has been regulated. Some decisions and steps must be taken. I submit it puts the members of the CRTC in an extremely invidious position in having to decide on matters indirectly related to the minister.

It is true that the minister now has a trust: these shares are held in trust by trustees. The minister may not have anything to do with them and no influence over them, but it is not a blind trust. The minister knows he owns the shares. This is a