

Privilege—Mr. Rae

MR. RAE—ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES AND MISLEADING ANSWERS BY MINISTERS—MINISTERS' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RIDINGS—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: Again last Wednesday the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) on a question of privilege raised the matter of what he felt was a discrepancy between the answers which the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) had given to him on February 19 and the answers given to him by the Solicitor General (Mr. Kaplan) on February 18 respecting an earlier question of privilege which the hon. member had raised on February 18 relating to the appointment of ministers of the Crown responsible for individual ridings.

While the debate ranged over the field of representation within the cabinet of provincial, regional and constituency interests, I am charged with the responsibility of determining whether any statement of facts constitutes on its face sufficient evidence of breach of privilege or, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) put it, "whether there is enough of a case" that I should give the matter priority and ask the House to decide whether it should be sent to committee.

Everyone who participated in the debate seemed to agree that there was a tradition, and indeed a necessity, for the interests of regions to be represented in the cabinet. The concern of the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood, however, is that there was a representation contained in a letter sent to one of his constituents by the Solicitor General stating that he was responsible for the riding of Broadview-Greenwood in the cabinet, and that the Solicitor General gave one explanation of that letter while the Minister of Finance gave another. The hon. member in effect says that there is a discrepancy between the two statements and that there yet remains what amounts to interference or implication that the Solicitor General represents the riding of Broadview-Greenwood in the cabinet.

There was a full debate from all sides on this matter and during his intervention the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) indicated that the only intention was to continue the tradition that the interests of regions of Canada were represented in cabinet, including those regions not represented in Parliament by the government party.

The hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood will appreciate that while some forms of representation could amount to a breach of privilege or contempt—for example, May's nineteenth edition at page 147 tells us that to represent oneself to be a parliamentary agent without possessing the necessary qualifications would amount to contempt—before any representation could be considered by the House as privilege, there would have to be evidence of something being done quite clearly improperly. It is trite to say that while a member is elected to one riding, he represents the whole country. Can one deny that each member of the government represents all of Canada in cabinet, even though his or her departmental duties normally relate to a particular department? How that representation is done, however, is another matter. What has

happened here is that the choice used in this case has occasioned the hon. member to raise what is really a grievance rather than a matter of privilege.

During the course of debate on the matter it was suggested by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and for that matter the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre that when the Prime Minister was advising the House that hon. members could get assistance from the regional representative in the cabinet, apart from departmental ministers, the Prime Minister may have somehow changed the form of the question period and that henceforth members may not only direct questions to the departmental minister but also to the regional minister in order to get some kind of assistance.

I must state very clearly in this regard that members will appreciate that, even if a document is tabled or if a statement is made in the House, this does not in itself alter the rules of the House, and that those rules will continue to be applied during question period as was traditionally done according to rules and practices of the House of Commons.

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● (1510)

[*Translation*]

POINT OF ORDER

MR. PINARD—MOTION TO TELEVISIONIZE MR. REAGAN'S SPEECH AND APPEND IT TO *HANSARD*

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of Privy Council): I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The President of the Privy Council on a point of order.

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, concerning the address which the President of the United States will deliver before this House next Wednesday, I have consulted the spokesmen for the opposition parties and we are agreed as follows:

That the address of the President of the United States, Mr. Ronald Reagan, to be delivered in the House Chamber on Wednesday, March 11, 1981, before members of the Senate and the House of Commons, together with all introductory and related speeches, be printed as an Appendix to the House of Commons *Debates* of that day and form part of the records of this House; and

That the President's speech, attendant and related remarks be made available to the media for transmission in the usual way by the House of Commons broadcast system.

Motion agreed to.