

visited. However, that option was not exercised. It is only when they thought they had the goods on the hon. member for Leeds that they decided to screw the screws, to put the old screwboot on and muzzle him. That is wrong. That is a deep interference with the rights and privileges of the members of this House.

● (1532)

Members have a responsibility to be discreet when they raise these matters. We all have that responsibility. I think we have exercised it. However, for the Solicitor General to have brought in this matter in the fashion in which he has, is completely repugnant to everything I understand about the rules of natural justice in this country.

The ultimatum is unforgivable. To give the hon. member for Leeds between 1:16 and four o'clock to seek counsel about the options with which he is confronted, is unforgivable.

The options are all very serious because, from the remarks of the Solicitor General, they obviously involve the possibility of charges being laid under the Official Secrets Act against the hon. member for Leeds. Surely he has the right to expect an adequate time to consult with and obtain advice from counsel.

I do not think this is within your jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker, but the events, and the solution to the problem that has been caused by these events, are within the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General or the Prime Minister. I would like to gain the Prime Minister's attention because I want him to hear my suggestion. I see he has been consulting with the Solicitor General.

The least the Prime Minister can do is allow the hon. member for Leeds an adequate, reasonable time within which he will be able to afford the opportunity to consult with and obtain the advice of counsel before he succumbs to any intimidation brought upon him this afternoon.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment on the extraordinary things which have been said about the breach of privilege and the lack of either courtesy or of honouring a privilege in relation to the right to counsel. Surely what we are involved in here is an extending of unusual courtesy to the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) which would not have been extended to an ordinary citizen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: We are not involved here in a question of the whims of the government but of the rule of law of this land as enacted by parliament, the Official Secrets Act. It is to protect the security of this country. In most circles it is seen as being as important to the preservation of the state as any branch of law. In any case, it is the law of the land as enacted by this parliament. Accompanying the law of this land often go rights to lay charges and perform searches in order to obtain evidence without any notice, because the very point of the action taken is that it may be necessary to have that evidence obtained.

Privilege

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: Of course there is no doubt about the right of such a citizen, in our law, to obtain advice of counsel. However, for an ordinary citizen that often comes after the time the charge has been laid and the search has been performed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: The Solicitor General (Mr. Blais), as I understood his remarks, indicated that he had first personally asked the hon. member for the evidence and the material which are at the root of this offence against the law, which is alleged. Indeed, he was counting on the co-operation of the hon. member of which, however, the hon. member's past conduct has not given much evidence.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lang: Notwithstanding that and with presumably, as the Solicitor General has indicated, legal advice about courses of action which were possible, he thought it appropriate, because of the traditions of members of parliament, traditions which I hope all members here, including the hon. member for Leeds, will honour, in the circumstances to allow him to come forward with the information requested in order that the law of this land not continue to be flouted.

The giving of notice about the possible courses of action is now cited as a breach of the privileges of a member, when in fact it is evidence of the extension by the Solicitor General of significant privileges to this member which would not be extended in relation to such a case to any other citizen in this land.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up the debate on this very important question of privilege precisely where the Minister of Justice left off.

An hon. Member: Minister of Transport.

Mr. Broadbent: Excuse me, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), trying to act as the Minister of Justice.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: The matter is serious. I am not trying to be facetious about it. The Minister of Transport just said that what was involved in the logic of the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) indicates that he was calling for something that would not be granted to any other ordinary citizen of Canada. With respect, Mr. Speaker, in terms of being a privilege of a member of parliament, that is precisely what privilege is all about.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Once a citizen becomes a member of parliament, the supreme legislative body of this land, he or she