

Privilege

My personal preference would be that the response would be sufficient to remind members that this is inappropriate, this cannot be tolerated and will not be in the future. Hopefully, it will not occur again. But should that be the case, it will be dealt with in the most severe way possible.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I do not suppose there is a member here in the House who does not regret the incident as it transpired last night.

We are fortunate here today in that we have a situation where all of the material facts are either agreed to or apparent on the face of the record that we have here in the House. In addition, the hon. member involved has himself forthrightly addressed the matter already and has even put forward an apology in a very sincere fashion.

It is regrettable, but I suppose that we must, from time to time here in the House, stop our ordinary business to address matters involving our own conduct. In my view, the proposed procedure is adequate to do two things. One, it will address the incident itself adequately and expeditiously. Second, it will provide a precedent which may become useful to members here in the House in the future.

I would like to encourage members to get on with this matter now and address the question.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I also wish to see us get on with the issue.

I feel I have to stand and add a couple of comments. I would ask the indulgence of my colleagues while I do so. Obviously, I join with them in regretting the incident. I have to say that over the nearly three years that I have been here I have always admired the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam. I see him as a very energetic and intelligent, committed member of Parliament.

I look at the incident last night and, quite frankly, a phrase comes to my mind: "There, but for the grace of God, go I". In that sense, I hope I would never do that. I hope no hon. member would ever do that, but who knows? We are all human. As the hon. member from Vancouver said a few minutes ago, these things happen.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, there are two or three points that I want to make that I think are very germane. This provides an opportunity to make points that I have wanted to make for some time, since I came to this place.

I think there is a difference between the incident that took place here last night and the more recent incidents that involved the use of language that is utterly and completely reprehensible in this place with respect to other members.

Nobody could be more combative in debate, perhaps, than I can. Nobody enjoys heckling any more than I can. But the fact of the matter is there are people watching out there. People are losing respect for this place because of the kinds of things that are going on here.

Let it be clear that when we use inappropriate language back and forth across this House, it is doubtless provoked by one to the other, and back and forth. This happens sometimes.

What took place here last night was an action taken against an officer of the House who did nothing to provoke that incident. What took place here last night was a physical action as opposed to calling somebody something.

Let us not wash over this fact, much as we all might like to say: "Let's just forget the whole incident". I am sure the hon. member understands my motivation in making the comment. We cannot wash it away. When something wrong is done, it must be brought to account.

I would hope that we would use this, however, as a launching pad because of the gravity of this situation. I was bothered by the incidents that took place in the last couple of months and referred to by the hon. member for St. Hubert. I was bothered by the fact that nothing happened with respect to those incidents which to me were unacceptable, though perhaps not at the same level of gravity. I have been bothered by other things I have seen here. I have been bothered by the fact that one cannot get up and call someone a liar in this place, but it is okay for someone to stand in their place and mislead, distort and twist information. That has always seemed kind of perverse to me, that it would seem one can lie here but one cannot call someone a liar.