

Privilege—Mr. Jelinek

However, if I may, I was not aware of some of the events commented on by the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) that took place at committee. My recollection is somewhat different, and I think the record should show that. There is no question but that the Government of the day wished to limit the time of witnesses to 45 minutes and wished to have these meetings over at a particular point in time. However, I suggest respectfully that the impasse on Bill C-22 may have been averted if members opposite, in particular the Minister responsible for Bill C-22, had the courage of their convictions and convened some deliberations with members opposite. However, that was not in the cards, not at all. It forced members of the Opposition, members of my Party—and I am not speaking for the New Democratic Party—to do things we would not necessarily want to do to impede good debate in committee and in the House of Commons.

You made a number of comments, Mr. Speaker. However, I say that there was one omission, and I just bring it to your attention. You talked about the committee, you talked about divisions, as did the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski), but you did not talk about the 47 amendments on the floor of the House of Commons which are germane to the substance of the Bill itself. That has to be given some consideration. Perhaps you have given that consideration, but perhaps you did not articulate it in the way in which I wanted it to be articulated.

I raise that point in terms of future deliberations with regard to Bill C-22 and where it will go in coming weeks and months. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, with great sincerity that the substance of the Bill is wrong—wrong. We in the Opposition are deathly against Bill C-22 as it now stands. Because of the insensitivities and the activities of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre), you have been faced with a very difficult decision which we on this side of the House will respect and honour.

Mr. Speaker: I would ask Hon. Members to abide by my request to close off comments on the ruling. I would invite Hon. Members on both sides of the House to read it carefully, and my door is always open.

However, I must say that I listened with very great care to Hon. Members in these comments after the ruling. I know those comments were made because they feel, and appropriately so, that they have a duty to comment in this Chamber on the ruling. I have not taken that as a challenge to the ruling, and I do not think in any way anybody should even indicate that that was in the minds of any of the Hon. Members who are well and favourably known to me. I do not think that was it at all.

I have said that I did not enjoy making this ruling. If you examine it carefully, you will see that it is a very carefully circumscribed ruling.

Now let me meet the observation of the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) who said that this is putting an undue

amount of discretion on the Chair and that that is something new around here.

● (1150)

First, remember that all our precedents are as a consequence of some Speaker somewhere making a ruling. I do not seek more discretion. What I seek, and what I hope Hon. Members will do, is to clarify these rules in such a way that no Speaker, whether it is myself or somebody else, is put into the position which I feel I have been put into in this circumstance where I have to make a decision which can give grave concern. I may think that I will not abuse the discretionary position that I have taken at a future time, but what Hon. Members have to concern themselves with is that I might not, but somebody else might.

I want to say to the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall), the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) and others that I am deeply aware of all of that danger. There it is. This, as all Hon. Members know, is not always an easy place to be sitting. I want to say again how much I appreciate the spirit of goodwill and devotion to this place that Hon. Members have exhibited in receiving a ruling which I recognize is not one which some members would have wished me to make at this time.

The Hon. Minister for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mr. Jelinek) is rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Jelinek: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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PRIVILEGE

CODE OF CONDUCT—ALLEGED BREACH BY MINISTER

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport)): Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have given you appropriate notice, and it is with sadness and some anger that I must rise today on a question of privilege arising out of the totally irresponsible conduct of a fellow Member of this House during Question Period yesterday. The Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) used distorted information, half-truths and unsubstantiated innuendo to smear my reputation as a Member of Parliament.

If this were an isolated incident by the Opposition using unchecked and wrong information, it would be hard to justify taking the time of the House to respond. As I will detail in a few moments, all—I repeat, all the facts relevant to this case have been on the public record at the office of the Assistant Deputy Registrar General if the Member had bothered to ask. He did not.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated incident. This House of Commons over which you preside has become too often little more than a forum of mud-slinging and smear tactics by Hon. Members. However, there is no honour in