

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I reply to that before the hon. member raises the point of order. I will recognize him immediately after.

I am very reluctant to follow the suggestion which the hon. member is now making. The only kind of intervention the Chair could make in the circumstances would be to say to a minister or chairman of a committee: "You may not answer that question." That is the only kind of intervention I could make. The microphone operators would of course follow if I interfered and indicated that such a person in the House may not be authorized to answer a question, but rather another one.

I think bringing in the microphones at this point is not terribly helpful. I would certainly think twice before changing the long-standing custom of this House of ministers rising to answer if a question is addressed to them. However, they do not always rise when a question is addressed to them. Another minister may rise because he feels it is his responsibility. I think that breaking that custom should only be done after very serious reflection.

I do not think the microphones are terribly relevant to what happened the other day. If I had felt I could intervene because I could interpret the question, and the problem was that the question had a double interpretation, it was not up to the Chair to interpret the meaning of that question. Therefore, I had to leave it to the relevant persons to determine if they wanted to reply or not.

In this case both replied. In a sense, everyone was satisfied because the House got a reply from the President of the Privy Council, who felt he was answering with his responsibility for government business. The chairman of the standing committee answered because he felt that the question, the one posed by the Leader of the Opposition, was more specific and he could answer it, and he did. Everyone was satisfied. I think we should wait until another incident occurs to see whether there is a problem with the microphones. At this point I am reluctant to change the custom.

I will now recognize the hon. member on his point of order.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, the whole point is that the selection was not made by the Chair but by the operators.

Madam Speaker: In answer to the hon. member for Yukon, I feel the selection was not made by the operators of the microphones but was made by two people on the floor of the House. They decided to answer the question. I do not feel that the microphone operators had a major role in this particular incident.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I do not want to prolong the matter of the microphones nor would I raise any question on a matter on which you have already decided. I have been seeking to review the record of *Hansard* in light of your statement after your decision that both members on the government side of the House, the chairman of the committee to whom the question was directed and the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard), had the right to speak. The House will recall that a

private member, the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne), was allowed to speak only after permission to speak was given to him by the President of the Privy Council. It was at that point the President of the Privy Council took his seat.

Madam Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition is really discussing the ruling. That point was considered in my ruling. I apologize, but I cannot hear the right hon. member on that.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, I just want to say that after reading your remarks in *Hansard* I want to serve notice now that I may raise a further question of privilege dealing with this whole question of the electronic selection of who is going to be heard and who is not.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, last Thursday the President of the Privy Council indicated the business for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, but was reluctant to indicate the business for Thursday and Friday. If Bill C-48, the Canada Oil and Gas Act, continues today we are in a position of not knowing what the business of the House will be for tomorrow. I wonder if the President of the Privy Council would at least tell us today one more day's House business so that we can do some preparation for tomorrow.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Unless otherwise notified, Madam Speaker, tomorrow we will continue to deal with Bill C-48.

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[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. COSSITT—INFORMATION PROVIDED IN WRITTEN ANSWER ALLEGED FALSE

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege arises from material referring to myself and appearing in the third report of the commission of inquiry concerning activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, commonly known as the McDonald commission.

I realize a member is required to bring a question of privilege to the attention of the Chair immediately on becoming aware of it. A while ago, Madam Speaker, I advised you in my written notice that although this report was issued some time ago, only late yesterday did I have the opportunity to read as far as page 341 of the third report and discover what I believe is a clear question of privilege appearing therein. I can only hope, Madam Speaker, that you will take my word as an hon. member of this House that, had I known about this sooner, I would most definitely have raised it before now.

The section of the McDonald commission report to which I refer deals with Question No. 2,332 placed by myself on the