

Supply

doctors on the riding executive of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), of lawyers on that of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn), or of women on that of the Minister of State for the status of women. *Reductio ad absurdum* perhaps, but I think this illustrates the point.

[*Translation*]

Before going into the question of privilege itself, I felt I had to express a few general considerations on the points connected with it. It is always useful to set guidelines and I feel that we should avoid as much as possible mentioning by name people who are unable to defend themselves in any context whatsoever against innuendos. I suggest also that in the absence of any concrete evidence, we should avoid suggesting that there might be a conflict of interest simply because a member of a county association is involved in an activity of some sort or is a member of a given profession.

[*English*]

I come now to the complaint of the Hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I have already stated that questions concerning conflict of interest guidelines are legitimate, and I did not rule out of order the question of the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway. The Hon. Minister, nevertheless, saw in the question an implied slur against himself and another individual named in the question. The Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway assured the House that he made no accusation either against the Minister or the other person. His assurance was quite unequivocal, and I must take this into account. In addition, the Minister's direct and forthright statement, and the contributions to the discussion made by other Hon. Members, satisfy me that the Minister's reputation has suffered no damage and that no one is likely to question his integrity.

I, therefore, find that I cannot accord this matter precedence over other business. However, I would again remind the House that while questions concerning conflict of interest guidelines are legitimate, great care should be taken in framing them. I would particularly exhort Hon. Members to avoid referring by name to persons who do not enjoy our immunities. There may, from time to time, be exceptional circumstances in which the national interest calls for the naming of an individual. Such circumstances are rare, however, and I am sure that none of us would wish to take the slightest risk of harming an innocent person.

I would, however, like to add something. As I indicated before, matters like this are giving the Chair considerable difficulty. Of course, the Chair must, when a question of privilege is taken arising out of questions which offend someone, keep in mind that the question I have to decide, on a question of privilege, is whether or not the question has reduced the capacity of the Hon. Minister to do his or her duty as a Member of this place. That is the narrow question I have to face, and in this case I have no hesitation in saying that, as a consequence of the questions and the exchange that followed, the Hon. Minister's integrity is left without any question at all.

• (1120)

In my view, there has been no damage done to the Hon. Minister. As I have said, no Minister could have made a more frank response to the alleged innuendo of the question. Free speech in this place is dependent upon order. It is very important, especially when considering the extraordinary privileges we all enjoy here, that a lot of common sense be used.

I also want to say something else. I said the other day that the Opposition has the undoubted right to ask questions and to probe, and I also said that the Opposition has the undoubted duty to do so. I do not think there is any student of parliamentary history who would quarrel with that affirmation. I intend to be very vigilant in ensuring that those rights and duties are properly protected in this place. However, if ever there is an occasion when a Member feels very strongly that something should be revealed here, then I would ask that Hon. Members pursue that particular issue through a fact-finding mission of some care. If it is not required to do so in this place, then the appropriate procedure is to lay a charge and there are procedures under our rules providing for that.

In the interests of order, common sense and some concern for each other, I would ask all Hon. Members to be extremely careful on these matters. I thank all Hon. Members for their interventions the other day which, frankly, I found helpful.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 82—POSTAL SERVICE—LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition)
moved:

That this House condemn the government for allowing the deterioration of Canada's postal service by undermining the principle of fair and equal services to all Canadians through the substitution of "super mail boxes" for door to door service and by the closure of rural post offices, and by exacerbating already disintegrating labour-management relations within Canada Post by removing labour representation from the Corporation's Board and by other confrontational actions, thereby increasing the threats of postal service disruptions or even shutdowns.

He said: Mr. Speaker, when we became a nation, a confederation, the Government had two principal roles; the first was to protect and defend the realm and the second was to deliver the mail. This Government cannot even deliver the mail.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, in our view, which is supported by our spokesman and colleague the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano), home delivery is an essential service that must be reinstated in Canada. When establishing the Canada Post Corporation in 1981, the then Liberal Government recognized that mail is an essential public service. It is neither an extravaganza or a luxury—it is a basic service that should be available to all Canadians.