

[Translation]

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES
OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I also move that Mr. Denis Pronovost, member for the electoral district of Saint-Maurice, present and future—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: —all right, member for the electoral district of Saint-Maurice. Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Mr. Denis Pronovost, member for the electoral district of Saint-Maurice, be appointed Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole House.

Motion agreed to.

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[English]

PRIVILEGE

RELEASE OF RESULTS OF POLLS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I received in my mail that I was sorting through during Question Period the material that I referred to in the notice to Your Honour. In fact it was referred to subsequently in an answer given by the Minister of Employment and Immigration in this House.

To say that I was shocked to receive this material is to put it mildly because it was a press release issued by the Minister of Employment and Immigration in which she releases statistics prepared by Decima Research, apparently in response to a government contract for a series of questions put to Canadians concerning, effectively, the government's policies as adumbrated in Bill C-21.

It is a well known fact that when we in the opposition put questions to the government and Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers on the Order Paper requesting studies and statistical data prepared in the form of polls by the government, this information is regularly refused to us. We are told that the polling is private and is done, admittedly with public funds, but for the purpose of enabling the government to make decisions or receive the views of Canadians, or whatever the answer may be. The information is denied to us here in Parliament.

Privilege

Yet here, today, we have a situation in which the Minister of Employment and Immigration has released this bundle of statistics, this poll, that she has had commissioned, apparently at public expense, because the results of the poll clearly are ones that she thinks are favourable to the cause that she is proposing in Bill C-21. It is an attempt to influence the Senate of Canada by making this—

Mr. Cooper: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Milliken: I am on a question of privilege and a question of privilege takes precedence over a point of order. I wish the hon. member for Peace River would pay some attention to the rules.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. member for Peace River in a moment. Perhaps the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands could get to where the privilege is in this.

Mr. Milliken: I am almost there.

The point is that this information is denied to members of Parliament on a regular and consistent basis. Now, all of a sudden, when it suits the government's purpose, it dumps it out on the floor of the House in answer to questions and in press releases across the country.

If it is going to be made public today in this way, it should be made public on every occasion that it is asked for. The denial of making it public and the secrecy that surrounds these polls in the usual way constitutes a breach of the privileges of this House, if the government is going to release the polls when it suits its fancy to do so. That is what is going on here. I object and ask, Mr. Speaker, that you rule this is unparliamentary and a breach of our privileges.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a complaint. It is not a new complaint. The complaint has been raised on a number of occasions going back through the long history of this place.

The hon. member has made his complaint clear, but I do not think the Chair can intervene if the government wishes, as it has in this case, to release all the material, and as it has refused to do in other cases. I have to say the complaint falls short of privilege.