

Privilege

• (1040)

For some reason, I thought that perhaps the Speaker might reconsider and listen to those members. Foolish in retrospect, but I do want to say that I did not intend to show contempt for this House. I did not intend to show contempt for the Speaker. I have worked in this House as well as any member and I have always shown great respect for the House. I was thinking about British parliamentary tradition, and I know the dangers of touching the Mace and what it represents. I know what happened to King Charles when he did that, he got his head cut off.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Waddell: I do not want to give the members any ideas. The members will forgive me, but there was a young MP in the Bahamas years ago who picked up the Mace and threw it outside actually. His name Lynden Pindling and he has been Prime Minister for 30 years I think now There have been other incidents.

Mr. Speaker, let me return. This is a serious matter and I do not want to joke about it. I listened to what the member said. I offer my complete apologies to the Sergeant-at-Arms, to the other members, to the gentleman who sent you the fax. I have not received my fax but I will get it no doubt and I will reply to it and other letters.

I do not think I can say any more than that. I have offered my apologies. I know that there have been incidents in the House where people have been accused of being racist and sexist and so on. This is a different sort of incident, nevertheless a serious incident as well. I say to the members who spoke today that I offer them and the House my apologies. Those were not excuses, my concerns for seniors and the procedure of the House and the vote, but I want the members to know that this is not just for me, that I had in my mind that I was trying to do something to further my own ends in any way. In my own mind, there were members standing up in the House, we were a long way from the Chair, and there members standing up here from the House who wanted to get on and wanted to speak and I thought they should get a chance and then the House could be adjourned. I was trying to alert the Speaker. I walked up and the Mace was there. I touched the Mace and I should not have done so.

This is the fourth time I have said it and I will say it again. I know the member from High Park and I know the member from the Ottawa Valley, Renfrew—Nipissing, and I deeply respect them. When members like that stand up and say that they were hurt and everything, I want to tell them that I understand. When it comes from members like that then there was something wrong and I apologize for that.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to say how much we appreciate the very thoughtful interventions that all members have provided to the House this morning. In respect to the institution of Parliament, to the position of The Speaker and to the position of the Sergeant-at-Arms, I want to on behalf of all of the caucus join with the member and apologize for this unfortunate and inappropriate incident.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that the traditions and symbols of this place are very important in terms of our democracy, the democratic way of government and the institution of Parliament. The member has apologized to yourself, Mr. Speaker, to the members of the House and to the Sergeant-at-Arms. We realize that this is a very, very grave and very important issue.

There has been a suggested course of action that you will undoubtedly reflect upon. I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that another course of action would be for you to name the member. This is a tradition of this House for inappropriate actions that members take from time to time. I simply leave that with you, Mr. Speaker. We apologize for this unfortunate incident and I want to suggest an alternate course of action that you may wish to consider.

Mr. Speaker: The first thing I want to say is that the Chair appreciates very much the manner in which all hon. members in the Chamber this morning have dealt with what is clearly a painful and difficult matter. That is very much appreciated.

Perhaps I do not need to say this, but I intend to say that the expressions of support for the Chair, and the officers of the Chair, the Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair last night, are also very much appreciated. They do not come as a surprise. I think I know as well as anyone in this Chamber the very high regard that this House and its members have for the Chair and for this institution.