

Yesterday's events were the results of a procedure, the government having introduced a GST bill which we have fought, as you know, Mr. Speaker, continuously since it was suggested to the House some months ago. Liberals will continue to fight that bill, but we will do it within the rules. We will do it within the spirit of the rules. We will do it to try and get the government to withdraw that proposal, but we will always abide by the rules.

Normally the claim that a member voted twice—and that is the claim, I think, that is being made by my friend and colleague, the government Whip—would be dealt with, I suspect, as a matter of order rather than as a matter of privilege. No reasonable member, and I suspect that we are all reasonable members here, would try to accelerate this accusation into a claim of contempt unless—and I underline that—there was ample evidence that this behaviour was an intentional, calculated effort to impede the work of the House. If that can be proven, then there may be reasons for contempt.

But if any member chooses to accuse another member of contempt on that basis in such circumstances, he or she must be able to support that accusation with facts.

Let us look at the *Hansard* of yesterday. I know it is going to be difficult because what I have to say is pretty touchy in the sense that I was here. I heard the Clerk call the name of the member for Regina—Lumsden. I saw the member for Regina—Lumsden attempt to rise and point his fingers, making a sign, I thought, that he intended to vote. It could be—and I am going to give him the benefit of the doubt—that he had a cramp in his hamstrings, that he had a sore back, or something, or that he made a mistake and sat down. He admitted himself: “I will admit I lifted my backside from the chair an inch”, so I have to give him the benefit of the doubt on that one. It is my only way of looking at a gentleman's word.

In the other case, I was here again.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member is suggesting that sometimes hon. members rise with no consequence at all.

Mr. Gauthier: Sometimes they do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cooper: Don't take that personally.

Privilege

Mr. Gauthier: I am not taking that personally, don't worry.

In the other case concerning the member for Windsor—St. Clair, I was here, Mr. Speaker. I saw and heard the Clerk call the name of Mr. McCurdy. Mr. McCurdy, when the member was challenged by the Chair, or asked by the Chair, he said this, as reported in yesterday's *Hansard* at page 7441:

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was really quite clear that I stood fully erect against the vote. I thought that was pretty clear.

The only conclusion I can draw—and I am being very fair here—is that members of the NDP have difficulties standing up for anything.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gauthier: They do not know when they are standing or not standing.

Mr. Speaker: We ought to confine our argument to the physical act of standing, not to matters of great principle in a general sense. I know that the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier would want to assist the Speaker.

Mr. Gauthier: That is what I am doing, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Sir, you were invited to look at the transcripts of the videos of yesterday's deliberations. If you do that, Mr. Speaker, you cannot draw any other conclusion but that indeed they tried to stand. One said: “I stood erect”. In both cases they either have not got a backbone in their back and thus they cannot use it, or they have had some kind of difficulties asserting whether they were sitting or standing—and I am being fair; I am being very fair here.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is a professional man. I would think that I could almost take judicial notice of what the hon. member says about whether or not there is a backbone. However, I am still concerned about whether or not, backbone or not, the body belonging to the hon. member got up.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I shall leave you to decide that. In your great judgment, knowledge and wisdom you will have to decide whether they did stand or not—and they possibly did. I will leave that to you.

The Chair will also have to decide whether the Clerk saw them stand, yes or no. We all saw the Clerk, heard the Clerk acknowledge the person. I am not going to question the Table's vision or how it interprets people standing or sitting.