

*Privilege*

is totally congruent with the neutrality which she traditionally displays in this House.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, this is a House matter and I would like to pursue it now unless the Chair so directs that I cannot pursue it at this time. I would prefer to make my intervention which I indicated earlier is very short, succinct and to the point.

**Mr. Speaker:** There has been a bit of a discussion about the matter. I think the hon. member has the right to proceed if he wishes.

**Mr. Dingwall:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary authorities in Canada are vague on this particular point. In Britain however there is no doubt. Once a member accepts a position in the chair of the House, any position, he or she abandons all partisanship, even refraining from voting in any divisions.

Canadian experience is less clear. With regard to the Speaker, Beauchesne's sixth edition, citation 168, indicates how a Speaker must remove himself or herself from partisan activity. The most noteworthy quote is:

Confidence in the impartiality of the Speaker is an indispensable condition of the successful working of procedure, and many conventions exist which have as their object, not only to ensure the impartiality of the Speaker but also, to ensure that there is a general recognition of the Speaker's impartiality.

• (1115)

Beauchesne goes on to indicate that there has been less stringent inhibitions put on junior chair officers with regard to partisanship.

Citation 184 reads:

Deputy Speakers have not taken a consistent position with respect to attendance at their political party's functions. During divisions they have voted but have not attempted to participate otherwise in the debates of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to you that contemporary usage does now impose a stricter discipline upon chair officers, especially the Deputy Speaker and most especially the present Deputy Speaker. The Deputy Speaker is no longer merely an occasional substitute for the Speaker. The Deputy Speaker occupies the chair more often than the Speaker during most debates and it has become the regular practice of the present Speaker to permit the

Deputy Speaker to take the chair for one Question Period at least one day every week.

In addition, the present Deputy Speaker is a member of the Board of Internal Economy, not as a representative of a party, but as a representative of the House as a whole.

I want to make it perfectly clear I am not questioning the performance of the Deputy Speaker, not in debate, not during Question Period. She has retained her membership in her political party but in accordance with that tradition has not made a great deal of this and I think all members recognize that.

However, the Deputy Speaker intends to make a very big show of her partisanship. She intends to be the co-chair of her party's leadership convention using, whether intentionally or not, the prestige and public familiarity that she derives from her office as Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons to attempt to enhance the prestige of the partisan proceedings over which she intends to preside.

How can an officer of the House appear to be impartial or claim to be impartial when she undertakes so active a role in the partisan activities of her own political party? How can members of the House who belong to other parties put their trust in the impartiality of the Chair under such circumstances, especially in the heat of the most partisan part of the parliamentary day, Question Period?

There is no satisfactory answer. If the Deputy Speaker were to remove herself from this obvious conflict of interest, I think the matter would die. However, if the Deputy Speaker is unwilling to do so, I wish to inform you that I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

**Mr. Edwards:** Mr. Speaker, as I said a little earlier, I am disappointed that this matter has even been raised.

As my hon. friend for Cape Breton—East Richmond has conceded, the performance of the Deputy Speaker is not at issue here. I would submit to you, Sir, that is the only issue which could be before us. Her performance is not in question nor has it even been suggested by my hon. friend opposite that her performance would be degraded by this. I think what he is getting at is the