

*Privilege—Mrs. Holt*

We certainly agree to this matter being postponed. I do not see what difference it makes to the government whether we take Wednesday afternoon or Thursday afternoon away from government business. Perhaps the actual decision on this could be left to be settled by agreement on Monday on the understanding that the debate would not take place any earlier than Wednesday.

● (1220)

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning an exchange which took place during the question period, and so allow the Solicitor General to extricate himself from the position in which he has placed himself. This matter ought to be considered in its proper context.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, if the corporal from Quebec opposite could only keep his mouth shut for a while, I know the Prime Minister would be happy.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, surely I am entitled to be heard on the point of order. It arises from information given to the Solicitor General and from press reports saying that the RCMP has solicited informants in the parliamentary press gallery. The point is important to all in this House because parliament has some responsibility, I suggest, with respect to the activities of the parliamentary press gallery. As the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway has pointed out, we have responsibility for making sure that the parliamentary press gallery not only acts responsibly but is not in any way intimidated by governmental or quasi-governmental agencies or, indeed, by any particular faction in our society.

Yesterday I asked the Solicitor General if the RCMP had solicited members of the press gallery to give information about their colleagues. My question related specifically to a news article which referred to four Soviet correspondents in the parliamentary press gallery. The question was asked in that context and the Solicitor General answered it in the same context. As reported at page 5307 of *Hansard*, I asked the Solicitor General if Kitty McKinsey was requested to obtain or gather information over a period of time with respect to members of the parliamentary press gallery. The minister in answer spoke of the activities of the foreign press corps who are perhaps suspected of being involved in intelligence activities in Canada as being subject to inquiry by the RCMP.

**An hon. Member:** He didn't say that.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Well, one can come to no conclusion except that the RCMP are attempting to obtain information about the Soviet Union members of the press gallery.

**An hon. Member:** You did not read what the minister said.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, hon. members opposite want one to spell everything out specifically. I suggest that one can

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

come to no other conclusion if one reads the Solicitor General's answers to the line of questioning raised yesterday.

**An hon. Member:** Read the questions.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Mr. Speaker, with respect, our rules do not allow members to ask hypothetical questions. I did not ask a hypothetical question. I asked a specific question about a specific incident. Today I raised a question which I felt had to be raised in order to clear the name of a responsible CBC correspondent. I was alarmed and surprised when the Secretary of State, who answers in this House for the CBC, said he was not aware of the matter I was raising. I find it incredible that the minister should not know about it. Then, having said he knew nothing about it, he alleged that I was being irresponsible. I find that strange.

Mr. Speaker, this matter becomes important when viewed in the context of current events. It has been alleged that members of the cabinet have exerted influence on the CBC. Some of them have accused the CBC of bias in its reporting. I, therefore, say we must make absolutely certain that neither the government nor anybody else intimidates or tries to influence in any way our parliamentary press gallery. The Secretary of State, who seems to be abdicating his responsibilities, first said he knew nothing about the story. He then accused me of being irresponsible because I had raised a certain matter in order to clarify it and protect the persons involved. That being so, I suggest irresponsibility is to be attributed to the person who made that allegation, and not to myself.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member has made a spirited defence of the question he has raised. However, obviously, it does not constitute a question of privilege.

**Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point or order. With the greatest respect, sir, I appreciate your difficulties and know the care you take in allotting questions during the question period to various members of this House. The point I raise is in no way a criticism of your procedures, but it should be pointed out to Your Honour and to the House that today six members from British Columbia sat on the official opposition benches. Five of them, at least, to my knowledge,—the hon. members for Esquimalt-Saanich, Capilano, Fraser Valley East, Okanagan-Kootenay—including myself, stood in our place seeking to catch Your Honour's eye so that we might ask questions. I know that we cannot all be recognized when we wish to be.

**Mr. Ouellet:** Talk to your whip.

**Mr. Clarke:** I hope we may appeal for assistance on occasions such as the present.

**Mr. Ouellet:** You did not put your names at the top of the list.

**Mr. Clarke:** After all, we have a duty to perform.

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** We don't use the list system.