

*Privilege—Mr. Nielsen*

unfair and unreasonable kind of reasoning on a matter of privilege I have heard since I came here.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** If I may, Madam Speaker, I would like to intervene briefly in this debate. I have to go back to the substance of the problem. First, the chairman of that committee stated that, under the rules, he has no authority to give satisfaction to a member who is complaining that his privileges have been breached. That is my first point. Here is the second point: the only recourse available to him, according to the chairman, would be to report to the House. Here is the third point: that report is voted down in committee by the Liberal majority. Under the circumstances, Madam Speaker, how can the member complain and seek redress when he claims that his privileges were breached?

It is difficult to accept the notion that a majority vote in a committee will decide whether or not privileges have been breached.

[*English*]

I should like to underline one other matter raised by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), namely, that in this House it is forbidden to us to call fellow members, on our side or any other side, liars, or to say they are speaking an untruth. As the hon. member said, the reason for that is simple. We have to take their word for it. When we can no longer take that word, this House is in serious trouble. This House is in trouble now because of this stupid dilemma in which we find ourselves.

I say, Madam Speaker, that the matter is over to you as the guardian and custodian of the rules of this House and, if it is not over to you, then it is game over for the House and for Parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam Speaker:** I might make a few remarks before I allow another hon. member to speak.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) spoke in impeccable French, and I congratulate him for that, but I must tell him that he did not bring new arguments which had not already been made in this debate by previous speakers. When participants in a debate reach the point where they repeat what has already been said I think the time has come for the Chair to indicate that just about enough information has been collected on the question under debate. That is why, before I recognize the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen), I urge him to be very precise and to come up with new arguments; otherwise I will have to ask him to limit himself and be extremely brief in his intervention because I have already allowed a rather lengthy debate on this

question. I must now have new arguments, otherwise I will not hear more interventions.

● (1610)

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Madam Speaker, indeed allow me to say very simply that nothing is lost by underscoring some specific arguments made in the debate.

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order, but I did hear what the hon. member said.

[*English*]

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta):** Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. I noted with interest that the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) used, and I quote him accurately, the term "mere changing of a mind". I would remind him and the government House leader that government members are entitled to change their minds as often as they want until they make a solemn commitment. After they make a commitment under the oath of the Privy Council, they are bound. That is the crucial point of this debate.

**An hon. Member:** Right on.

**Mr. Friesen:** They can change their mind as often as they want to, until they make a solemn commitment.

Second, I want to point out that this commitment was made not on the basis of a surprise amendment thrust upon them on the spur of the moment which would take them off guard so that they made an inadvertent error in judgment, but rather on an amendment which had been tabled by the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) a week prior to the time, and the government had that entire week from Tuesday to Friday to study the amendment, which they did. They came back with plenty of foreknowledge and, as a deliberate action, made a commitment to the Conservative members of that committee, and then withdrew it. It was a deliberate act on their part.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member, of course, is not referring to the proceedings of the committee. He will have to restrain his arguments to other aspects of this question.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Ministerial responsibility.

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, the point is that members of the House must be able to count on the ministerial sense of responsibility and accountability. Once that commitment has been given, they must be able to depend on that commitment and not have the word broken by other kinds of negotiations which have been going on in order, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said yesterday, to maintain the consensus for which they were looking.