

However, there is the second point that I have mentioned. This letter makes us wonder about the use that banks make of this information. A committee investigation could throw some light on this matter, but are we going to order investigations in all areas where there is a fear that there might be a violation of members' privileges without the House having at least serious grounds for believing that there has been a specific violation of a member's privileges or that this information now circulating among banks has been misused?

It seems to me that according to the facts which have been stated until now, there is no indication, not even a slight one, that the rights of the hon. member have been infringed upon by the internal circulation of this information. But whatever the case may be, I am very liberal when it comes to interpreting the privileges of members of Parliament. I believe that these privileges are of major importance. Your decision will not be easy to make, Madam Speaker. However, I wanted to make these few comments to show what principle Beauchesne suggests we should follow in such a matter.

● (1550)

[*English*]

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, I should like to make a brief comment. I think the essence of the question is whether the information has been used to intimidate members of Parliament. If that is the case, then definitely it is a question of privilege; if not, there is no case at this time.

I understand that the Bank Act will shortly be going to committee where, I am sure, the hon. member can pursue this matter and there will be ample opportunity for it to be ventilated appropriately to ascertain the facts.

You may wish to defer your decision, Madam Speaker. It is a wonderful thing sometimes to defer decisions on whether there is a *prima facie* case of privilege; it is a power that the Chair has. You may want to defer your decision until there is evidence brought out before the committee, at which time it might be appropriate to raise it again. However, although there is concern, I do not see a question of privilege at this time. It could very well be that we are not under surveillance, as one hon. member indicated we are. It could be that we would be subject to a marvellous lobby. All of us are subject to lobbies from time to time. I have been lobbied by the Canadian Consumers' Association and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Other members have been lobbied by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Anglican Church and the Kiwanis Club. If it is that, it is innocent. But if there is other evidence which should come out before the committee, then it is not innocent and I think it might be appropriate if your Honour deferred your decision until the case develops.

**Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River):** Madam Speaker, I should like to lend my voice for whatever assistance it might bring in considering this question of privilege. I suspect from the context of this letter that the two members who are

mentioned are not the only ones who have been scrutinized by the Canadian Bankers' Association. It is indicated in the letter that this practice has gone on for a period of time. I suggest that the letter presents a threat to members of Parliament in carrying out their duty, and therefore constitutes a breach of privilege.

What concerns me more than anything else is that information which I have discussed with my banker concerning my financial past and future may be available to those who lobby me and to other members of the House. This is dangerous. It has gone one step beyond what other members have suggested is a simple lobby. The fact that my banker might be privy to discussions with other members of the banking community about the advisability of my contributions in the House is of concern to me. I would see this as an attempt to coerce, for lack of a better term, the outcome. I consider this to be a very serious matter.

In my opinion it is fairly significant that this letter comes from the Royal Bank of Canada. I happened to be glancing through a record put out by a Philip Agee concerning the Central Intelligence Agency and I find that in the record he suggests that the Royal Bank of Canada was a funding agent for that organization. So I think we should all be vitally concerned about what happens to information given in trust to bankers regarding the activities of members of Parliament.

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia):** Madam Speaker, I would have to dissociate myself in this instance from the government House leader. It seems to me—and this has been conceded—that in all probability this is not a question of privilege. However, it is certainly a matter of serious concern, and when the Bank Act is discussed in committee obviously this question will be raised. I think it is incumbent upon the government not to wait for a question of privilege to arise. I think the government is in a position to make an order of reference to the committee to have this specific matter considered exclusive of the Bank Act.

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

[*Translation*]

**Madam Speaker:** The question is indeed a difficult one, nobody doubts that, but it is also very important because it could affect, it seems, the privileged communications and conversations that members can and should have with their constituents or other people, besides their constituents, who may have to provide them with information on certain issues. Since this question is not an easy one but rather a complicated one, because of prevailing trends in modern countries whereby information of this nature circulates rather freely and generally, we must, in light of these new facts, examine whether or not this constitutes a breach of members' privileges. This is, therefore, an important question and I thank the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) for raising it and especially for providing a copy of this letter to the leaders of the other parties who were thus able to provide me with informative arguments on the matter. But I will not rule today on