

Privilege—Mr. Trudel

upon that hon. member's difficulty in gaining permission to tour one of the federal penitentiaries. In his reasons, Mr. Speaker Lamoureux said on April 29, 1971:

On a number of occasions I have defined what I consider to be parliamentary privilege. Privilege is that which sets hon. members apart from other citizens giving them rights which the public do not possess. I suggest we should be careful in construing any particular circumstance which might add to the privileges which have been recognized over the years and perhaps over the centuries as belonging to members of the House of Commons. In my view, parliamentary privilege does not go much beyond the right of free speech in the House of Commons and the right of a member to discharge his duties in the House as a member of the House of Commons.

Bearing in mind that very concise reasoning, it seems to me that improvement upon it is impossible and, furthermore, unnecessary. The consequences of extending that definition of privilege to innumerable areas outside this chamber into which the work of an MP might carry him, and particularly to the great number of grievances he might encounter in the course of that work, would run contrary to the basic concept of privilege. The decision of Mr. Speaker Lamoureux is a reaffirmation of the representative value of this chamber and also of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility whereby such grievances can be and should be laid directly at the feet of the minister responsible. On that definition of privilege, despite the seriousness of the grievance I cannot find that it qualifies within the terms of a question of privilege.

MR. TRUDEL—FAILURE OF EMPLOYEES IN MONTREAL
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE OFFICES TO COMMUNICATE IN
BOTH OFFICIAL LANGUAGES—RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: With respect to the point raised by the hon. member for Montreal-Bourassa (Mr. Trudel), that question is in fact somewhat less difficult. Here there seems to be an evident breach of either the law or of a policy quite simply put forward by the government but in fact adopted by this entire House. There is, in addition, a very clear and direct line of ministerial responsibility. Indeed, this was confirmed by both ministers who took part in the discussion yesterday and accepted final ministerial responsibility for the complaint put forward by the hon. member. The hon. member's complaint is not unique to members of the House of Commons but, in fact, is common to members of the public, and for those reasons it would not appear to qualify.

May I add that it may be fortunate that these two points have come together. Because, indeed, if we were to extend the definition of "privilege" to the situation put forward by the hon. member for Laprairie (Mr. Watson), which, after all, has intricate and complex circumstances surrounding it, then having done that it would be difficult to stop short of covering the question put by the hon. member for Montreal-Bourassa (Mr. Trudel). In the final analysis, it would be almost impossible for the House to say that the complaint against government services would not qualify as a question of privilege. I hope hon. members would be unanimous that questions of privilege are not suitable for that kind of grievance.

On the other hand, all of us must recognize that the role of a member of parliament extends far beyond his work in this chamber; that more and more each day in modern

[Mr. Speaker.]

times a member is not only invited, but in fact compelled, to become involved in many activities outside the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: In the course of that work he will inevitably find some opposition to his activities or some criticism of them. Some of them will amount to legitimate grievances that ought to be brought to the doorstep of the minister responsible. Therefore, the only vehicle we have now is the question of privilege. If we accept a question of privilege in its classic terms as not suitable for accomplishing this objective, then we must surely begin to ask ourselves if we ought not now, in recognition of the many important areas into which members have to bring themselves, to be examining new effective and direct procedures to air those grievances that are legitimate grievances which arise outside the House but which do not qualify as questions of privilege.

It is all very well for the Chair to say that this is a grievance that ought to be laid directly at the doorstep of the minister. But it is not sufficient to do that in a private way because the subject is one that other members share in common if the grievance is established. In addition, it is not something that ought to be kept private between the minister and the member, because if it is true the public has the right to know about it.

Therefore, I put forward this question to the House: Is it time to consider other procedures for enabling members to bring forward directly to a minister, in some way other than that which we know now, those grievances that are indeed legitimate but which fall short of being questions of privilege? In the interim, may I say to both hon. members who have put forward these very important and interesting grievances, that until such procedures are developed, if it is their intention to seek recognition today in order to put a question with respect to those grievances to the ministers responsible, then I will have no difficulty in seeing them; and if they are not satisfied with the answers given by the ministers, I will see that their question will arrive on the late show tonight at ten o'clock.

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● (1420)

AIR CANADA

CLARIFICATION OF MEDIATION OFFER TO FINANCE BRANCH
EMPLOYEES AT WINNIPEG—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS
CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to present a motion under Standing Order 43. The urgency and pressing necessity of the matter is that there seems to be some misunderstanding regarding statements the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) has made in this House in respect of a situation at Winnipeg as between Air Canada and its finance branch employees. These employees have not heard of the mediation services of the minister's department referred to by the minister, and they have not heard of any proposal by Air Canada to renegotiate the agreement. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow):