

Privilege—Mr. Baldwin

rights of all members to function on behalf of the public of Canada are being curtailed. If the government has nothing to fear, let it accept the motion I am about to move. If Your Honour finds there is a prima facie case of privilege I would move:

That the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections inquire into the statements alleged to have been made by the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont, which appear in today's edition of the *Globe and Mail*, and into related or other incidents, which indicate that the rights of parliament on behalf of the people to have full and unabridged reporting of the actions of government are being threatened.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As a minimum I would accept the earlier indication of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) that an aspect of the presentation he has made on the alleged question of privileges relates to allegations concerning the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) in respect of certain journals in one or two provinces. That being the case, it is only appropriate, I think, that the matter should stand over until the Minister of Transport is in the House, so that we may see if he wants to make a contribution on this subject. That would be in line with the earlier, brief comments of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen). However, there may at this time be other hon. members who may wish to contribute on this question of privilege.

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) and in particular refer to these words of his motion, "... inquire ... into related or other incidents, ..." I wish to speak particularly on one of these "related or other incidents".

It seems to me that the basic duty of this House is to protect the freedoms of the Canadian people, not the least of which, indeed one of the most important of which, is the freedom of the press. This House must protect the right of fair comment on any matters whatsoever, including the conduct of those elected as members of this House.

Last weekend the "Canadian Magazine" failed to appear in Saskatchewan. It was alleged that this failure to appear was attributable possibly to interference or pressure exerted by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) or those acting on his behalf. If this is so, that action contravenes parliament's right to protect freedom of the press—

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Is the President of the Privy Council rising on a point of order?

Mr. MacEachen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. Surely there is some sense of justice left in the House of Commons. A question of privilege has been raised concerning the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), and another question of privilege is based on statements alleged to have been made by the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal). Neither person is in the House, and debate is proceeding on the question of privilege. Where is the sense of fair play and justice of this House?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Speaker: Order please. That is why, after the hon. member for Peace River had explained his position in raising the question of privilege, I suggested the matter might stand over. However, I was not able to determine if the contribution which other members wished to make ought to be made in the presence of those other hon. members. I really think that it is in keeping with our practices if the presentations on this kind of motion could take place in the presence of those who are accused. I see the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) rising.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I listened carefully to what Your Honour said, and I thought in fact that you had invited comment without limitation. If we are to ensure compliance on the point the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) raised, I suggest it is incumbent on him to ask the two members, whose names have been mentioned in connection with the matter, to attend in this House so that the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt) and others who may wish to contribute on this matter may do so, without being fettered, except to the extent that Your Honour may fetter them. If that is agreeable to you and to members of the House, any member who wishes to participate in the debate on the matters raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) particularly in his motion, ought to be able to do so then. I think there is a duty on the President of the Privy Council to rise in his place to ensure that the Minister and the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont will be here so that the matter can be settled rather than straggle on for a number of days. This is a very important issue.

• (1520)

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, it is not my fault or that of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) that the other two members are absent from this House. As the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) has pointed out, it behooves the government House leader to guarantee us not just that they will be here some day, but when. Those of us on this side, just as those on the other side, have other plans, obligations and things they must do. I do not feel it is fair that if a member wants to raise a question of privilege he should be curtailed from doing so by the mere absence of someone opposite who probably is not here because he knew this would be raised.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Whether it be done voluntarily, as has frequently been the case in the past, or whether those who wish to participate are not prepared to do it voluntarily, I should insist that at least on an initial basis, particularly in the case of a minister—I know it will be argued that hon. members are on an equal basis, but it is difficult to expect that a minister's schedule can be changed on a moment's notice to permit him to be here because he has been the subject of some question over a particular news article—that the courtesy be extended of indicating in a preliminary way that a question of