

Privilege

indirectly as a result of my willingness to offer to him all of the information that had been made available to me.

Mr. Fraser: Don't be so naïve.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, there was no intention to intimidate the hon. gentleman at all. As a matter of fact, if indicating to an hon. gentleman his obligation under the law is intimidation, then I feel that the hon. gentleman is being misguided in that particular opinion.

Evidently the hon. gentleman is very perturbed by that, and I regret it. I regret that he has interpreted my actions as being motivated in any other way but to discharge my responsibilities, taking into account fully his sensitivities as well, his security as a member of parliament. I said to him quite openly, as he indicated to me, that I was speaking to him as one member of parliament to another and as one who has a great deal of respect for this House and all its members, and as one who would never take an action, Mr. Speaker, in order to deprive any member of this House of his liberty without the full process of the protections that are available to him.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I speak as one who has been through this process before, and I have some experience in the circumstance giving rise to the question raised by the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Cossitt). What the Solicitor General's (Mr. Blais) rhetoric cannot avoid is the time frame within which he has denied the hon. member for Leeds the fundamental right to the rules of natural justice, the right to consult and obtain advice from counsel. It is all very well for him to use phrases such as "presumably", "perhaps"—those were his words—that there were security documents in the possession of the hon. member for Leeds, and then leave the member's office with the clear impression that he would have that opportunity and the time to consult with counsel until Monday. But then he discovered the hon. member an hour and 15 minutes later in the parliamentary restaurant and issued an ultimatum to him that he, the Solicitor General, had to have a reply by four o'clock otherwise he would exercise his options, which were explained by the hon. member for Leeds. Those options concerned a search warrant of his offices, his home and other premises and perhaps a suggestion of jail. It has been denied by the Solicitor General that that term was used, but the hon. member for Leeds has used it.

It is not up to the minister to instruct the hon. member for Leeds that there has been an alleged offence committed under the Official Secrets Act. It is not up to any other member of the government either to interfere to that extent with the right of a member of parliament without the concurrent right of that member to seek legal advice and have the time to do so. That is inexcusable. That was the pressure put on the hon. member for Leeds. It was not only being done by the Solicitor General but it was apparently being done with at least the knowledge of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau).

I prefer to believe that the Prime Minister made that call to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) as a courtesy. I prefer to believe it did not go beyond that. But for the Solicitor

[Mr. Blais.]

General attending as he did with the director of his security services, the RCMP, at the office of the member for Leeds, or to attend on any other member of this parliament in that fashion and under those circumstances, and as well to compress the time frame to a point where he is denied access to and advice from counsel, is completely repugnant to my understanding of the rules of natural justice which are followed under our system.

He based his case on the fact that he was advised by his security services that documents and, I use his words, "could be" in the possession of the member for Leeds. If that was his position then he has his recourse and that recourse is not to bring the pressures that he brought to bear with respect to the circumstances as he has outlined. What he did in effect to the hon. member for Leeds, and I have experienced this myself, was to give him an ultimatum at 1.15, when he spoke to him in the parliamentary restaurant. That ultimatum was that at four o'clock this afternoon he either had to come up with an answer that he would be willing to produce whatever he "perhaps" or "presumably", to use the Solicitor General's words, had in his possession, or he would be confronted with a search warrant for his home or his office, or with whatever other alternatives were described by the hon. member for Leeds as being available.

To my mind that is the grossest form—I will not use the term blackmail—of intimidation. If that is not interfering with the rights and privileges of a member of this House, I do not know what is.

There have been over the course of weeks in this House, sir, various revelations made not only by the hon. member for Leeds but by the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay). I have been involved in those questions myself in the past and currently. We have a right to expose those questions. I agree on the one hand that that right has to be exercised with discretion. But when we are confronted with an announcement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson) of the extent to which subversion is extant by the expulsion of 13 subversives, then surely it is incumbent upon the opposition to be even more vigilant to expose these matters. That is exactly what the member for Leeds was doing when he was bringing these matters up. All we have had is non-answers, evasion, ducking or weaving from the government, and no voluntary conduct on the part of the Solicitor General to visit the hon. member for Leeds to head this off. It is only when they think they have the goods on him, that they confront him in his office in the presence of one of the highest officers of the RCMP, the assistant commissioner.

If I heard the minister correctly, and I cannot with the sound system which exists here now—I could have in the past—I take it that he is saying the hon. member for Leeds never came to him. Surely the Solicitor General has the obligation when these questions are raised by the member for Leeds, or by my friend from Central Nova, or myself, to contact us.

Surely that obligation exists. It happened in the past with me and I co-operated with members of the force when I was