

I certainly will hear the hon. member on a plea of mitigation. The hon. member must be very careful not to attack the ruling the Deputy Speaker made last night.

Mr. Cook: Mr. Speaker, I will apologize if that was the way the remark was interpreted by the Chair.

The point I was making is what caused the member's conduct. It was four people waiting to be recognized who were not recognized.

The Speaker of the House of Commons must be the master of the House of Commons, but also the Speaker of the House of Commons is the servant of the Commons. Last night we had an incident in which at least one member was so incensed by what took place that he lost his temper and did something he will regret for the remainder of his life. It was improper. He must be admonished but it must be a gentle admonishment.

Part of the reason for the loss of his temper was the action of two other officers of the House of Commons, the chief government Whip and the chief opposition Whip. In the government's case, members were informed that there would be a 15 minute bell and the vote would be taken. I believe they both should be admonished as well, for their actions in ignoring the rights of members for 15 minutes. They did not allow sufficient time.

There were at least two cabinet ministers and eight members who expected that 15 minute bell and did not get it. That, I am sure, will be raised in the individual caucuses later.

In terms of the member, I understand his loss of temper. I deplore what he did, but I think we should be very, very careful as to how strong an admonishment he gets for attempting, in his view, to do his job for the misguided people of Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Let us not forget the other factor involved here. I was here the night that four members of my own party charged the Chair, stood in front of the Chair waiving their fists and stayed there for some time. The Speaker was a very strong man that night and I admired him tremendously. He stood there and took it and kept yelling for order until things finally settled down. That incident did not result in members being called before the bar and it was certainly as serious as the incident last night, in my view.

Privilege

I ask the Chair, with the greatest respect, to make that admonishment fairly light in terms of the history of unorthodox conduct in this place and in terms of the mitigating circumstances of the man simply losing his temper totally over what had taken place.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, let me state at the outset that I was also in the House last evening when this incident occurred. The member for Port Moody—Coquitlam and I were both on our feet trying to be recognized by the Chair when the decision was made to adjourn the House.

I would just like to make these succinct comments with the thought of trying to assist the Chair in its decision. The thought that permeates my mind is the dynamics of the moment. It all happened in a fraction of a second. There was no pre-thought about the incident. The House had adjourned and the member was obviously upset and within 30 seconds it was all over.

I would ask that the Chair take those comments into consideration when it is making its decision. I am sure the member seriously regrets it. There are incidents that sometimes we would all like to forget. I would use the charity of the House in admonishing this member.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to add a few brief comments.

First, it is a most regrettable incident. It is an embarrassing situation for the House of Commons, for all members and for all Canadians.

I think that there are two issues, however, and we must not get them confused. One is the challenge, if you wish, or an attack on the authority of the Chair. The other one, of course, is inappropriate behaviour.

If we are going to deal with the inappropriate behaviour, I submit we cannot forget the inappropriate behaviour that has occurred within the last month. I am referring to the sexist comments that were made in this House to the member for Hamilton East and the racist comments that were allegedly made to the member for Windsor—St. Clair. Let us try to keep the two issues separate.

Concerning inappropriate behaviour, it seems to me we have to look at the other issues as well. Otherwise, we are not being consistent. We are being, in fact, unfair.