

*Privilege—Mr. Hnatyshyn*

that our rules forbid unparliamentary language, and if the Postmaster General had called the member a swine, I realize the latter would have been justified in raising an objection and you would have been right in asking the minister to withdraw, since it is an unparliamentary term. But I do not think there is anything unparliamentary in saying that, generally speaking, hon. members who misuse the procedures lack courage. What I understand from the attitude of both the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre and the hon. member for Yukon is that they would like to be allowed to lack courage and not be reminded they so do. Further, I think the House of Commons is not a place where hypocrisy should reign, Madam Speaker.

It is obvious that since the beginning of this session hon. members have misused Standing Order 43. Indeed, a large number of members move motions under Standing Order 43 for reasons other than those provided for. It is clearly stated that motions should be of urgent nature and that hon. members are dispensed with giving notice of their motion only when it is a matter of urgency and of pressing necessity.

But when hon. members want to congratulate certain organizations or mark political points and make allegations against government members without asking questions later on the same subject, thereby preventing us on this side from answering back, if that is not lacking courage I fail to see how else I can describe it.

And if we, on this side of the House, are required to keep quiet, to refrain from commenting and to let members opposite misuse that procedure at times, I suggest it would be unfair to prevent the Postmaster General from taking this opportunity to complain as he did today.

So, Madam Speaker, I do not hesitate to assert that first, the language and behaviour of the Postmaster General was quite parliamentary, that he did not reflect on the privileges of any member, and I even commend him for having seized this opportunity to bring to the attention of the hon. members, especially those opposite, the fact that since the beginning of the session, they have clearly abused your patience and Standing Order 43 and that most of the time, they move motions under this Standing Order for purposes quite different from those for which it was really intended.

Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that after two elections in one year, when we have such a heavy legislative workload, hon. members manage to take 10, 15 or 20 minutes of the time of the House to raise matters as frivolous as the one that was raised today by the former minister of energy, mines and resources, seconded by the hon. member for Yukon. I think it is a shame and I suggest all those who are at present watching us on television rightly deplore the fact that parliamentarians do not act as they should. This is the kind of frivolous question of privilege that reflects on the image of this institution, Madam Speaker. It is because of this kind of filibustering that

we do not always command as much respect as we should from the Canadian people.

● (1530)

[English]

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, I should have thought there was nothing more prone to deteriorating the reputation of Parliament than to have the leader of the House stand up and defend the indefensible.

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

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** I would rather have had him, as the leading parliamentarian in the House, except for yourself, Madam Speaker, rise in his place and say that he would bring forcefully to the attention of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) the matters that have been raised, rather than hiding behind legalisms by saying this is not a question of privilege.

It is either a question of privilege or a point of order; it is one or the other. I do not want to repeat all the arguments, in order to save time, but it is one or the other. It was abusive and, however you want to deal with it, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was right. You should take a look at it overnight; you should review it not only in terms of a question of privilege, which has come to have quite a narrow interpretation in this House, but in terms of a point of order. You should review it in terms of whether it is appropriate, from the point of view of the operation of this Parliament, for the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) to cast doubts about this institution, that is, whether it is appropriate for a minister of the Crown, experienced like the Postmaster General is, to accuse other members when they use legitimate parliamentary devices of lacking courage.

Perhaps the President of the Privy Council should take his own advice and talk to the Postmaster General. In that way we might proceed in a much better way in this House.

**Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Madam Speaker, I too wish to support the suggestion that you take these remarks under consideration. Surely the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) is wrong. This issue does not involve motions under Standing Order 43, but rather it involves the abusive remarks of the minister, or whether the remarks of the minister were abusive. Although I was concerned when I sat through the debate on the Speech from the Throne when a minister spoke about the press in Quebec, and quite frankly spoke with rather fascist tendencies toward that press, I could accept that because that is part of debate. But we do not have to sit here and accept the kind of language he was using with the Quebec press, language used toward members of Parliament who are simply doing their job when standing and raising matters in the House of Commons under the provisions of Standing Order 43. When that occurs it becomes a matter of privilege.