

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

INTERVIEW GIVEN TO PRESS BY MR. DE COTRET

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for suspending the debate on the question of privilege raised in this House by my hon. colleague for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) on March 9, 1987. I have told you about my own concerns regarding the rights and privileges of Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, in his capacity as employer of the Public Service of Canada, the President of the Treasury Board objected to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration to swear in the four Unemployment Insurance Commissioners.

It was clear in my own mind and that of my colleagues of the Committee that this resolution was passed because one of the commissioners—not the one who was mentioned by the President of the Treasury Board—accepted with reluctance our invitation to appear before us and requested that the meeting be held *in camera*, which we judged unacceptable under the circumstances.

The Members of this House and of its committees are masters of their own destiny and nothing must hinder their work as Members of Parliament or of a committee, especially when they are only following the rules and procedures of the House and its committees.

Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with what the chairman of the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes), said in the House yesterday, as well as with the intervention of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt the day before.

Mr. Speaker, the servants of the state, technocrats, bureaucrats and senior public servants, who work tirelessly for their country and fellow citizens, deserve our respect and admiration. Most of them do a superhuman job and give priority to the interests of the state and the Government over their own. I can only congratulate them and encourage them to persevere so that my Government can always be reelected. As for those who would be tempted to bring about maliciously the defeat of my Government, I would like them to take note of my vigilance and my determination to stop any such attempt.

The Deputy Minister of Employment and Immigration, Mr. Gaétan Lussier, must not feel that he was the personal target of a general motion to swear in all the Unemployment Insurance Commissioners. Just as the Hon. Members for Calgary West and Nickel Belt, I believe that he has accomplished miracles with the small resources at his disposal. As an Officer of Canada, our youngest senior public servant has served his country extremely well and with ability as well as professionalism.

Point of Order—Mr. Robinson

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that Mr. Lussier will never dash out of the room of a committee of the House of Commons and that he will remain at the disposal of the democratically elected members of this House to give an account of the most important spending sector in this country, namely unemployment insurance.

Mr. Speaker, the gesture of the President of the Treasury Board to defend his employees is quite laudable. However, the members of the Committee must protect their rights and privileges as parliamentarians and account to the Canadian people for the activities they are asked to monitor.

Mr. Speaker, let us reassert our rights and privileges immediately.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for Laprairie (Mr. Jourdenais) for his intervention. However, the Chair will have to reserve its decision for now, perhaps until next week.

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[English]

POINT OF ORDER

INQUIRY REGARDING WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a brief but important point of order arising from the a written answer to a question on the Order Paper of February 20 last.

Recently it has become apparent that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has adopted many of the trappings of the Head of State of Canada. It was with considerable concern that I read the written response of the Prime Minister's own Parliamentary Secretary to a question asked recently in which in his response he referred to the Prime Minister as the Head of State of Canada. I refer to page 3655 of *Hansard*. At that page, in response to a question by the Hon. Member for Montreal—Saint Marie (Mr. Malépart) the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Gustafson) answers as follows:

1. & 2. As Head of State, it is a longstanding practice for a Prime Minister and/or his wife to give hospitality—

● (1510)

While we know the Prime Minister has great delusions of grandeur and has enjoyed the trappings of the Head of State, surely it is appropriate that the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary set the record straight by saying that the Government does not view the Prime Minister as the Head of State of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: I think I should indicate to Hon. Members that although I will hear Hon. Members, it seems to me it would strain the Chair a great deal to establish the entire matter raised by the Hon. Member for Burnaby as a point of