

*Privilege—Mr. Rodriguez*

## [Translation]

**Ms. Copps:** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to intervene on this point of order because the case of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), who has been under Canada Post surveillance, is not an isolated occurrence. I should like to draw the attention of the Chair to the fact that the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) held a pro-Rural Dignity meeting in his riding, and that the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou (Mr. Gagliano) made a speech in Vancouver where, as it happened, Post Canada employees had been sent to take notes and thus have an opportunity to intimidate people. I do not think the case of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt is an isolated case, for the established policy—with the Minister's blessing, of course—is to create problems for people who are prepared to express their views at open meetings or in the offices of Hon. Members.

If Mr. Speaker would examine this case—and not only the case of the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt but that of the Hon. Member for Saint-Léonard—Anjou and of other Members—I think he will see that the privileges of each Member of the House are affected because of the fact that people who have genuine grievances concerning superboxes, including Rural Dignity representatives, will be afraid to visit their own Members lest they be reported to Canada Post by employees or other people. This kind of policy must not be endorsed by the Minister nor by Canada Post.

I would not want the Speaker of the House to handle this as an isolated case, because this policy has been established by the Canada Post president and endorsed by the Minister, a policy of harassment against people who do not like superboxes any more than the closing of rural post offices.

• (1520)

## [English]

**Mr. Riis:** The point raised by my hon. colleague for Nickel Belt has become a serious matter as of today when it became a public issue. People across Canada will now be aware of the fact that, on certain occasions, certain government employees, under the direction of their employer, are asked to spy or conduct surveillance tactics on various members of the public.

In this case it is an isolated situation that happened in the office of the Member of Parliament for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). It means that people across Canada will wonder if, when they go to visit their Member of Parliament, and many do it with some concern, by visiting the Member of Parliament they may be penalized, as my hon. colleague indicates. We want to take every precaution to ensure that a Canadian, no matter where he or she may live, would always feel free to visit the office of his or her duly elected Member of Parliament. With the reality of the situation, at least in one Member's office, where members of a Crown corporation, in this case the postal corporation, were conducting surveillance on people entering the office of the Member of Parliament,

this has become an extremely serious issue in a country that prides itself on being free and democratic.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I forgot to add the precedent, and I wish to do so now, when Warren Hart was hired by the RCMP to conduct surveillance on Mr. Rosie Douglas who was involved in the destruction of the centre at the University of Montreal. In Mr. Douglas' approach to the Solicitor General of the day, the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand), and myself, Warren Hart ended up gathering information and watching that Hon. Member and me. At that time I raised the question of privilege. Speaker Jerome said there was *prima facie* evidence of privilege, that while I was not the subject of surveillance, and the Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East) was not the subject of surveillance, the fact of the matter is that we were caught in that web. Therefore, in his view, that constituted *prima facie* evidence of a breach of privilege. The question was put to the House that day, but unfortunately the Government of the day voted against the matter going to the appropriate committee.

If Your Honour would look at that precedent and find that there is a *prima facie* evidence of a breach of privilege, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion, or Your Honour might direct it to the Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedures.

**Mr. Speaker:** I recognize that the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) may well have something to contribute, and I will give him an opportunity to do so on another occasion.

Under the circumstances, the Chair would be assisted if time were given as a consequence of what has been said here for a response from the Hon. Minister who is responsible for Canada Post, but who does not run it on a day-to-day basis. I think I understood clearly from the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt that he was not saying, even if all these allegations are substantially accurate, that the Minister ordered this surveillance. I want that clearly on the record. I did not take it that the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt had stated that.

In fairness, I am going to adjourn the discussion at this point. I am not going to hear anybody else at the moment.

**Mr. Prud'homme:** That is wise.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme).

**Mr. Prud'homme:** My proposal was to suggest to Your Honour to do exactly that, that is, to take it under advisement and take all the time necessary. I am highly interested in this question, and I am sure Your Honour would prefer to have some time to reflect, and in due time to return to the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member for Saint-Denis.