

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 1, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. CAFIK—FAILURE OF DIVISION BELL TO RING IN PARTICULAR AREA OF WEST BLOCK

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege of which I gave notice this morning under Standing Order 17(2). My question of privilege relates to the ringing of the division bells within the buildings of the House of Commons. Last night at 5.45 p.m. there was a pre-scheduled vote in the House. About half an hour prior to that I returned from an organizational meeting of the committee on health and welfare to my office to make some urgent constituency calls, awaiting the ringing of the division bells. However, the bell did not ring in that particular area. I draw to your attention the fact that my office is not located in the ordinary halls of the House of Commons but rather in Room 268 of the west block on a smaller hallway running from one side of the building to the other.

I have also noted that this problem has occurred in the past. I refer the House to *Hansard* of Friday, June 18, 1971, page 6857, when my predecessor, who occupied the same office, made the same complaint on that date in respect of a vote on the previous night.

In view of the fact that we are in a minority government situation and that each vote in the House is extremely important, I hope this matter will be looked into and corrected.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: You were asleep.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. There can be no debate on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member. I have taken note of his complaint. Of course we accept his word that the bells did not ring. The matter will be brought to the attention of the Sergeant at Arms and of the staff of the House to ensure that there is no further difficulty with that or other bells.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member would have to rise on a different question of privilege. When there has been a ruling on behalf of the House by the Speaker that there is no question of privilege, there can be no debate.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege with reference to the ringing of the bells yesterday. I would call Your Honour's

attention to the fact that I do not question what the hon. member has raised by way of a question of privilege, but the bells did ring beyond six o'clock. I also draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that at two minutes after 6 p.m. the Prime Minister walked into the House for that vote and we proceeded from there.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would hope we would not get involved in a debate on whether the bells did or did not ring. I might indicate for the benefit of hon. members that I have notices of four questions of privilege and numerous other procedural matters, so if we want to get to the business of the House eventually we should try to avoid debate on each one of these questions of privilege.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask whether the hon. member is imputing improper motives to me in his statement and, if so, that he withdraw the imputation. I do not question whether the bells rang elsewhere in the buildings. I simply raise the point that they did not ring in the corridor off which my office is located, and I resent any suggestion by any hon. member to the contrary.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member checks the record he will find that I did not question the statement he made.

Mr. Cafik: What were you doing?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: Where were you when the bells were ringing?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Prud'homme: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I should not wish to—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will have to wait, because I have received notice of questions of privilege that should have immediate consideration.