

*Privilege—Mr. W. Baker*

Mr. Speaker, on this very point, it was not too clear to me from your remarks whether you will be looking at the propriety of spending federal funds for caucus research activities. What is at stake here, and I think it is important that you give some guidance on this question, is whether a caucus of the government should carry out some research on its own with public funds.

The issue was whether a caucus of a government should finance and support research activities out of public funds. He went on to say:

It is totally appropriate that a caucus should carry out such research, but whether it should use public funds for that purpose is the question.

Then members of the New Democratic Party had something to say about the matter. The very courageous hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) had something to say about it and, in the course of his argument on that occasion, informed the House—

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. gentleman just identified the principle upon which he wants to hang his hat. However, he has not yet advanced any fact upon which he could rely for the application of that particular principle.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** That is your interpretation; you are not the Speaker.

**Mr. Blais:** If he wants to identify the nature of the document to which he referred and indicate that the document has some sort of departmental origin which makes it not readily available, either under the freedom of information act, some other statute, or generally available to the Canadian public, he should so state.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, evidently the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) was out of the House or, as usual, was asleep when I identified the document. I said that the document was entitled: "Comments by the Office of the Leader of the New Democratic Party". As the minister well knows, there is no freedom of information legislation yet in place, but there is a very inferior bill now before the committee which this Parliament is doing its best to improve.

● (1250)

I want to deal with the comments made by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville. This is what he said:

—we now have information on the Order Paper that the federal government paid with public funds for the printing of this report.

Here is the relevant part—it comes a little later:

My question of privilege is that as a member of the NDP I do not have the privilege of being a member of that committee,—

Madam Speaker, I ask you to include with the word "committee" the word "assistance".

—nor do members of the liberal party or members of the Social Credit party.

I am saying that, as a member of the opposition, I am raising the same complaint that the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville raised on December 7, 1979. The coincidence is unavoidable. I do not have the same access to funds, to

assistance and to help, to present my position as seems to have been given by the government to the New Democratic Party.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I must interrupt the hon. member, since he has now been speaking for over 20 minutes on this question of privilege and has not yet indicated any real basis for it. The evidence for his question of privilege, which is not clearly demonstrated, is based on a newspaper article. The hon. member knows that a newspaper article may be quoted in order to support an argument, but it is not sufficient evidence for me to find a prima facie case of privilege.

I suppose what the hon. member is saying is that he does not have the same access to certain documents—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** No!

**Madam Speaker:** —which would have helped him to prepare a position paper for his party—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** No, you have got it wrong.

**Madam Speaker:** I am repeating nearly word for word the last sentence of the hon. member. What I have to find out, and what the hon. member must tell me very clearly, is why the hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) cannot quote from a document which has been tabled in the House by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien)—

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Because it has not been tabled.

**Madam Speaker:** —and why the Minister of Justice may not quote a document which might have been prepared by the hon. member for Oshawa or his party. I think that is a perfectly legitimate thing to do. One can quote the document if it is public, which is the case with the document of the minister; I do not know if the other document is public or not, but the minister might have knowledge of it.

The other argument the hon. member puts forward is that the document to which the hon. member for Oshawa allegedly has had access to was again allegedly written by an official. I would have to know clearly whether it has been written by an official. That is the first point.

The second point that I would have to know is in what manner the hon. member for Oshawa came in contact with this document. Did the government give it to him selectively and not to others? Nothing of that sort has been demonstrated in the hon. member's argument. It is extremely difficult for me to find grounds for a question of privilege in what the hon. member has said until now.

I must say that having listened for 20 minutes I cannot listen any longer. I feel that the hon. member does not have a question of privilege at this point. I see his indignation but he must know that the Chair has some difficulty—

**Mr. Clark:** And some responsibility!