

Privilege—Mr. Stanley Knowles

Mr. Speaker: On that last point, just to set it aside, I attempted to do this orally in a very quick way. The intention is to seek—and I did not get into numbers—36 pages in that respect, three from each of the areas, the ten provinces and the two territories.

● (1532)

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address myself to two questions that have been raised during the question of privilege. I must say that I was quite disappointed in the minister's response to what I thought was a very courteous and generous presentation of the issue by the House leader of my party.

The issue raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in terms of holding a convention for any political party in Canada was that there should not be any kind of intimidation by any local group in this country, particularly a local group that has been federally funded, and that could inhibit that process. The local group concerned, if I understand it correctly, was appointed by the minister who spoke on the issue, intimidated—and I will use it openly—the member for the Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth), who happens to be, and it has not been mentioned, a Metis in this country. For that reason, he happens to be a little more sensitive maybe than the rest of us when he is subjected to what most of us could call a put-down by the white majority.

I think it is useful for us to discuss this issue, but not so naively as to assume that a minority feel just the same as the rest of us when they are confronted by such a situation. The hon. member for the Northwest Territories, in my view, very appropriately, in terms of the interests of the people he represents in that part of Canada, decided to have a political convention. It is true that he chose a time when a lot of people were coming in for another function, and it is true that they were going to be using public funds for that convention. I would like to point out to the minister that most of these people might not have been able to come the hundreds of miles to a political convention if such had not been the case.

The minister, who sort of oozed her way around the point that perhaps the hon. member for the Northwest Territories was inappropriately having a convention at that time, was incorrect. It was quite the contrary. I would like to see all of the political parties—and I am not making a criticism of the other parties—seize such opportunities, in a part of the country where most people are too damned poor to attend a political convention. Rather than seeing it as a fault, Mr. Speaker, I see it as a virtue.

The member for the Northwest Territories—and let us not be naive about that either—is going to get the nomination. He has done a good job, and there is no local opposition to him for the nomination. All he wanted to do was take advantage of the event and schedule the convention when it was going to be open to a lot of people who are in the main poor and spread over hundreds and thousands of miles. What happened was that a local official, for God knows what reason, but certainly not a good reason, attempted to intimidate that member and

[Mr. Nielsen.]

said, "No, you can't have this convention at this time or we are going to strike you off from the official list of participants in the opening of these important games."

I say that is wrong. There was nothing wrong with the scheduling of that meeting. I repeat, I would be happy if all the political parties of Canada could schedule their meetings at a time when people could attend. Once again, it was poor people in the main. I resent the minister getting up, and instead of replying with some courtesy to what I took to be a courteous and generous comment by the House leader of my party and, indeed, courteous comments of the member for the Northwest Territories himself, implying that it was inappropriate for him to have a convention at that time. That kind of suggestion on her part, to put it euphemistically, was less than gracious.

I do not want to take up the time of the House. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre stated, it is a ruling that you will have to make, Mr. Speaker, and it should probably be left over to a later date when the hon. member is back in this House. I wanted to make the comments that I did today because, instead of responding in an appropriate way, the minister who entered into the debate did just the opposite. Instead of coming to the defence of an hon. member in this House, who is trying to do his job in a democratic fashion, the minister brought up a spurious point and hurled irrelevant abuse in his direction.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, if I may make a very short contribution to the question of privilege, there is nothing wrong with any member of parliament taking advantage of a public occasion to hold a nominating convention. That is not a bad thing to do, and the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mrs. Campagnolo) ought not to give umbrage to an hon. member doing just that.

The Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport did not take advantage of the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) that perhaps the other ministers involved would like to take part. If it is to be an issue—and the issue for you to decide is whether it is a question of privilege at all—we had better have all of the facts, including those of the hon. member for whom the nominating convention is alleged to have caused such great difficulty that the mayor of Hay River may have taken what I regard as a most unusual step. We are not here to determine the privileges of the members, and I think it might be appropriate to listen to the hon. member before we go any further. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there are some considerable doubts as to whether it is a question of privilege.

I want to point out, however, that the New Democratic Party has successfully used up 37 minutes of time on this issue whereas we could have been dealing with the bill involving the northern pipeline.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I do not intend to use up any more time except to say that it is important to this country