

Privilege—Mr. Rae

defies the basic principle of representation by population. I do not know whether Your Honour has had the opportunity to examine the document which lists ministerial responsibilities for geographic areas. It singles out two provinces, Quebec and Ontario, where ministerial responsibilities are broken down by constituencies. Some ministers have responsibility for four constituencies and others for five. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) has responsibility for seven constituencies. All other provinces are represented by one minister.

In the province of British Columbia there are 28 constituencies. The whole province is represented by a minister who does not even sit in this House. He has not been elected.

Mr. Friesen: In fact, he was defeated.

Mr. Oberle: Is it the intention of this government to establish a one-party democracy? Let us not fool ourselves about this practice. This is a pork-barrel strategy to distribute public funds for political purposes. That is what this question of privilege is all about. It does not have anything to do with building a bridge or ensuring that a certain region has access to cabinet. It is about distributing public funds to a group of Canadians in a certain area to which they are entitled, and has nothing to do with politics. Is it the intention of this group of one-party democrats to place themselves in a position in the province of Ontario in the same way they are in the province of Quebec? Are they now saying the rest of the country does not matter? We all know that is their strategy because that is where the population is.

There are 21 constituencies in the province of Alberta. They are represented by Senator Bud Olson who does not even sit in this House. Alberta and British Columbia do not matter; Saskatchewan does not matter. They do not have a minister in this House. The only provinces that matter are Ontario and Quebec. That is where the raw political power is and that is where the pork-barrel has to be rolled.

That is the crux of this argument. It is on those grounds that Your Honour must consider this question. There is no way that we on this side will sit quiet. We will not let you curtail this debate until this matter is referred to the committee where it can be properly debated. If parliamentary democracy still means anything in this country, this matter must go to committee. If any matter had to go to committee, it is this.

• (1700)

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) told us today that ministers have regional responsibilities. The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) lectured us the other day with regard to cabinet government and the responsibilities of members, and said that the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) had no understanding of cabinet government. Clearly, they were talking about the executive arm of government. When the Prime Minister spoke, he spoke about executive responsibility.

I think there is very definitely a *prima facie* case of privilege here, simply because once there is an executive responsibility there also has to be a parliamentary responsibility and, given the present rules, there is no room for ministers to be held responsible here in Parliament for those executive responsibilities which the Prime Minister has now assigned to them.

My constituents are not being heard in that cabinet. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) has been ineffective in bringing forward to that cabinet the concerns and pleas of the people who live in my riding, and the only way I can be assured that he will be effective and responsible, in a democratic sense, for that which the Prime Minister says he is responsible is to be able to question him in this House. So I feel very strongly, Madam Speaker, that we very definitely have a *prima facie* case of privilege here.

Madam Speaker: I will hear one more member. Does the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) wish to speak on this matter?

Mr. Nielsen: I have another dimension, Madam Speaker, which I will raise later on.

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon, then.

Mr. Nielsen: I will defer to my colleague, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, I think it is most important and commendable that you should grant an extended debate on this question, because a number of complications have come forward this afternoon and I would like to add to that list by raising a couple of additional dimensions.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) came into the House this afternoon and made official a process which was first raised by way of the question of privilege of the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae). He said to us here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, that he wanted to see a process which would bring government and Parliament to all Canadians, which is as it should be and I think, Madam Speaker, we all agree with that.

We must recognize that we cannot disregard this question of twinning, which is an initiative taken at the partisan level by the Liberal Party of Canada, because it is difficult to determine in this question where politics ends and the responsibility to service the constituents of Canada begins.

Madam Speaker, I would like to submit that there is something wrong about the attitude of the government in the manner in which this initiative has been taken, and I would like to illustrate it by making reference to a situation which occurred in my riding last Saturday. Last Saturday, Madam Speaker, I was invited to attend the sod-turning for a new, intermediate care home facility in my riding, and the sod-turning invitation came from the non-profit society which was initiating the project.

Upon arrival, I learned there was a representative of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation present, but no