

making a very serious mistake because it is driving a larger wedge into the division which they have already created in this country.

If you find, Madam Speaker, that the points which I have raised are indeed a prima facie case of privilege, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker):

That the matter of twinning and the abuse of public funds, parliamentary benefits and the confidentiality of communications between MPs and their constituents be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

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

**Mr. D. M. Collette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Madam Speaker, I do not think that one on this side of the House could remain seated and listen to the remarks made by the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) without making a comment in rebuttal. I submit that the matter that the hon. member has raised does not constitute a question of privilege. Perhaps the hon. member is somewhat hypersensitive about the normal democratic process operating within his riding; that is, the right of all Canadians to belong to whatever political party they choose, to attend meetings, to elicit information and to make public statements.

I can understand, considering that our party has not done too well in Alberta in the past, that the emerging Liberal presence and our reorganization there is somewhat of a shock to the hon. member for Bow River and some of his colleagues.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Rae:** Are you using a microscope?

**Mr. Collette:** I submit that the hon. member for Bow River and his colleagues from Alberta will have to become more accustomed to a greater Liberal presence in that province.

With regard to the question of the hon. senator from Alberta, it is not for this House to interfere with the right of any minister to assign duties to his exempt staff. There is a long tradition of exempt staff taking on political activities so long as they fall within the bounds of normal propriety. I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** What an answer!

**Mr. Collette:** I would remind the members opposite that senators and MPs are paid indemnities. Indeed, we are given extra privileges for airplane and rail travel to serve all Canadians. I, being the representative of a particular constituency, am not prohibited from communicating with anybody in this country. In fact, I would seriously submit that the hon. member has really impinged on the concept of national unity as it has come to be adopted in this House and throughout the country by not wanting and resenting Canadians from other provinces getting to know the people of his province through twinning.

**Mr. Kempling:** What a silly argument.

*Privilege—Mr. Taylor*

**Mr. Collette:** It is not a silly argument. I would submit that the opposition is being somewhat sensitive. The Canadian Council for National Unity wrote to me recently and suggested, if I was agreeable, that I be paired with the hon. member for Peace George-Prince River—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Collette:** Madam Speaker, the attitude of the opposition is shown in the derision with which they greeted my comments on national unity.

**An hon. Member:** It is "Prince George-Peace River".

**Mr. Collette:** Yes, it is Prince George-Peace River.

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, the brief point of order that I want to raise is that, quite apart from the personal qualities which invite derision from this side of the House, our response was to the hon. member's misnaming of the constituency to which he has been twinned. If the hon. member is to be twinned to that constituency, I would suggest that he get the name right.

**Mr. Collette:** Madam Speaker, I would think that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), the former prime minister of this country, would have better things to do than sit here at four o'clock in the afternoon and make facile comments about particular things I am saying. Of course, Madam Speaker, this particular penchant of the right hon. member was recognized on February 18 and perhaps accounts for the fact that he is sitting on that side of the House today. I am sorry that I misnamed the hon. member's constituency, however.

● (1600)

I want to bring to the attention of the House that the Council for National Unity is trying to develop understanding across the country. They wrote to me as the member representing York East in Metropolitan Toronto and asked if I wanted to co-operate and be twinned with a constituency in British Columbia, the constituency of the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle). I mentioned it to him in passing and I hope that the council will be in touch with him. Certainly I and my constituents would be most glad to share an understanding with the hon. member.

I would remind hon. members that there are cities throughout the country which are officially paired or twinned. It is a municipal practice. I understand that Hull is twinned with the city of Edmonton. Surely the hon. member for Bow River is not arguing against this laudable practice. What we have here, I think, is some hypersensitivity on the part of the hon. member for Bow River and a disregard, if you will, for national unity. I submit that no privileges of the House have been infringed.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I should like to state that the former Conservative candidate in my constituency who was nominated some two years prior to the 1979 election opened a constituency office in my constituency, had the nerve