

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 9, 1993

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

CO-CHAIR OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE CONVENTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: Yesterday the hon. House leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition rose on a question of privilege claiming that the Deputy Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot was guilty of a contempt of the House for accepting to co-chair the Progressive Conservative leadership convention in June 1993.

Normally the Chair would not allow comment on the conduct of a Chair occupant to come before the House in such a manner. There is a formal and well-established procedure whereby Chair occupants can be censured. I allowed the discussion because the hon. member insisted on proceeding forthwith and pointed out, as subsequently also did the hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam, that the Deputy Speaker's performance in the House was above any reproach and was not in question.

I have had an opportunity to review the comments hon. members have made and I wish to thank all those who sought to assist the Chair in this most delicate issue.

I have reviewed the procedural authorities and have found much comment on the role and impartiality of the Speaker but regretfully very little on the Deputy Speaker. Practice and conventions vary greatly throughout the Commonwealth. In Canada, Deputy Speakers invariably, during majority governments, are chosen from the ruling party on motion made by the Prime Minister. They remain members of their political party, may attend caucus if they choose and may even participate in debate.

They can, and often have, voted on controversial government proposals. Some Deputy Speakers have chosen not to attend caucus and/or have refrained from voting in the House. The current incumbent has done just that, voting only twice since assuming the role of Deputy Speaker, on the abortion legislation, which I point out was a free vote, and on the question for the 1992 referendum. It is no doubt such exemplary conduct that led to the generous comments made about her by all members who participated in yesterday's discussion.

In the context of the Canadian practice, and in the absence of specific direction of the House, Deputy Speakers have exercised their discretion to varying degrees. I have some difficulty in agreeing with the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond that the Deputy Speaker is cloaked with the same exigencies that are expected of the Speaker himself or herself, and I am deliberately careful in not extending such a responsibility by way of *ex cathedra* comments in this decision. I have no hesitation in ruling, however, that the matter as raised by the hon. member does not constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1010)

[*English*]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 1993

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting Supplementary Estimates (C) for the financial year ending March 31, 1993, was presented by Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board) and read by the Speaker to the House.

[*Translation*]

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEES

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I move: