

Privilege—Mr. Crosbie

to change the nature of this country without the consent of its people and without the consent of its provinces. It has proven to be extremely unreliable from the point of view of the Minister of Justice but very, very reliable from the point of view of the rights and privileges of the members of this House and the people of Canada.

The Prime Minister this afternoon—

Madam Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member is really arguing the substance and I have to stop him from doing that because I need him to argue the matter of privilege. Furthermore, the hon. member has now been speaking for nearly 20 minutes. He does not have to comply with my enjoiner to try to restrict himself to a shorter time in order to allow other members of the House to explain their question of privilege, but I am just asking him to try to do it so that I can be fair to other members.

Mr. Crosbie: Right, Madam Speaker, I agree with your submission. I certainly want to have others give their views on this matter.

I would conclude by saying that the strength of the question of privilege brought by my hon. colleague from St. John's East and presented so well by him in his usual calm and rational approach to problems before this House and the question that I have brought here today has been amply supported by the attitude and remarks of the Prime Minister this afternoon. For the first time he has had to admit that this whole process is an extremely dubious one, and that there are grave constitutional and legal questions about it. He has been shocked by the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland.

If Your Honour will take this question of privilege under advisement and look at the transcript of his remarks this afternoon, it will be very clear that what he said, in effect, supports the question of privilege we have put before you. I ask you to find a prima facie case so that this question can go to the proper committee to be looked at in a serious fashion and reported back to the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Madam Speaker—

An hon. Member: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, I said I would hear only one speaker. I would only hear a second speaker if I had any doubts about whether the privilege was founded or not.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I want to say to the hon. member for St. John's West that his question of privilege is not quite as good as the other Crosbie's. The other Crosbie's case was about a sworn witness who had been threatened with arrest and therefore the privileges of the House—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

Mr. Lambert: A point of order, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Members may not raise points of order while the Chair is addressing the House. I will hear any points later on.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You are assuming—

Mr. Lambert: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Will the hon. member resume his seat.

Mr. Lambert: Madam Speaker, I insist—

Madam Speaker: Will the hon. member resume his seat.

Mr. Lambert: I insist that before you make your ruling we be heard.

An hon. Member: Sit down.

Madam Speaker: Order, order. I plead with the hon. member, who was a Speaker in this House and understands—

Mr. Lambert: That is why—

Madam Speaker: —what I am trying to do.

Mr. Lambert: I would never do what you are doing.

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. member please resume his seat.

Mr. Lambert: I would never do what you are doing.

An hon. Member: What a silly thing to say.

Madam Speaker: I want to explain to the House that I have so many questions of privilege to deal with that I am applying a discretion which I applied yesterday.

An hon. Member: It is closure.

Madam Speaker: It is not closure. It is a discretion that the Speaker has and it is given to a—

Mr. Lambert: Only to satisfy—

Madam Speaker: —Speaker for a very good reason, that is, to maintain the flow of debate in the manner in which it should take place in the House. That is the only discretion the Speaker has at this point and that is the one I want to apply. I applied it all day yesterday to the satisfaction of all members. I repeat, I will hear a second speaker only when I have some doubt about whether or not a case of privilege is founded.

In these two particular cases or privilege, members will have to agree with me that the questions brought up were extremely close to the one on which I have just ruled. It is a different court that has made a decision on a matter which hon. members wanted to discuss, but the purport of it is quite close to the one on which I have just ruled. I feel I can rule having heard those two members.