

Privilege

Mr. Speaker, this response is not satisfactory at all, and when I think it took two months for each line, things are worse still. As far as I know the Board of Internal Economy is not a dictator and, in cases of requests for public funds, it should have to justify its decisions. Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot be satisfied with this “no”, no “for the time being”.

For what reasons was the request deemed impossible? I suggest that nine members of the House are entitled to know who made the decision. When you say “for the time being”, what do you mean by “for the time being”? Will it be possible next week or even the following month?

Mr. Speaker, I call on your sense of fairness to explain to me why some members of this House have access to research services when others, who must play the role of opposition, do not have access to these same services.

Mr. Speaker, which rule of the House prescribes that there are two kinds of members? Does the decision of your board create two categories, those who are entitled to research services and have the right to carry out their mandate in the opposition, and the other element which is even worse, because with the budgets the traditional parties have voted for themselves they continue to use funds allocated at the time when some of us were in other parties. Mr. Speaker, we know that these amounts are calculated on the basis of the number of members in the House.

Therefore, I find it unacceptable that the Progressive Conservative Party should continue getting over one million dollars, the Liberal Party \$674,000, the NDP \$461,000, while no research staff is available to our group, which represents nine ridings.

Mr. Speaker, even in the Members' Manual of Allowances and Services, they explain that it was agreed later on to make the research funds also available to the caucuses and ordinary members.

When I read this on page 2 of Chapter E-8 of the Members' Manual of Allowances and Services, I agree with you that the members of our group rank as individuals members, but I do not understand why, if these funds are available to individuals members, your reply was so short, so unjustified and so unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that your Board of Internal Economy operates as a sort of small select club, but it is

indefensible not to provide the necessary means to those who have legitimately chosen to defend certain options which you might not share. But democracy being what it is, I feel that the Board of Internal Economy through its rules, is imposing what I call the tyranny of the majority. It will not allow the people who do not share their option to have access to the same services. I do not see why my friend the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie who sits here as an individual member should he not have access to as much research staff as the former member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie? What is the difference? Was he less properly elected than the former incumbent? What is this private club, whose members allow themselves millions of dollars but who refuse to make them available to the people who do not share their view, but who have greater legitimacy in public opinion?

My colleague of the Reform Party has no research staff either, and we all know that if an election was held today, she would represent many more citizens than all of the Western Tory Members put together. And I can foresee that if an election was held today, there would be very few Tory Members on the other side and that the Bloc quebecois would represent thousands and even millions of people.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is making a point which goes very much to the administration of this place. I am listening carefully. A political speech is not going to help me make up my mind as to how I respond to the particular issue that the hon. member is raising.

I certainly have the hon. member's point. I would ask him to sum up.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to dwell on this issue, but I must say that in order to fully carry out my responsibility as the member for Shefford, I must have the same rights and privileges as any other member in this House. I insist that all hon. members should be treated the same because we represent here thousands upon thousands of people. We want to do so adequately. Mr. Speaker, research staff are there first and foremost to make it possible for members of the opposition to make a thorough review of the government's legislation.