

motives with respect to the activities or actions of any member of the House of Commons.

We have here a situation on a daily basis where members of the opposition have the right to move motions under Standing Order 43, and you, Madam Speaker, are the sole judge of the appropriateness of those motions. In fact you ask whether the individual motion has received unanimous consent of the House. I object to the Postmaster General casting reflection on Madam Speaker in the performance of your duties in this House. The Postmaster General ought to stand in his place, if he has the courage, if he is the man he likes to pretend he is, and if he is interested in the House, to withdraw any implication of motives by any member, including Madam Speaker.

● (1520)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Of course Liberal members have no respect for this House; they laugh at this. But Madam Speaker has a very difficult duty to perform. The fact is that it is clearly within the rules and the citation I have indicated. The Postmaster General in his remarks, as I heard them in the House, cast aspersions with respect to people who stand in the House and move motions under Standing Order 43.

I have one final comment in relation to this question of privilege. I feel I have moved motions with respect to the responsibilities of the Postmaster General relating to the operation of the Post Office in the province of Saskatchewan. I have attempted to obtain answers from the Postmaster General. I wrote him something in the vicinity of 50 letters on behalf of constituents, people in the Post Office and people interested in the operation of the Post Office. I have not had the courtesy of a reply from the Postmaster General to any of those letters. I still have not received one. I suggest that the motion under Standing Order 43 was one step toward convincing the government to change the wrong-headed policy that it was considering. There is some merit in motions under Standing Order 43. It has been demonstrated that, in using that device, we in the opposition can bring the government to its senses, and the Postmaster General in particular.

With respect to the operation of this House, if the Postmaster General continues to cast aspersions on members moving motions under Standing Order 43, Madam Speaker should ask him, under the citation I have indicated, to stand in his place and withdraw any implication of motive with respect to the operation of that rule.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I will be very brief in my intervention. There is another aspect to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn), and that is the direct statement of the minister accusing those on this side of the House who raised motions under Standing Order 43 and not putting questions to

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ministers, of lacking courage. Those were his words, that they lacked courage and that is why motions under Standing Order 43 were moved. Page 111 of the fifth edition of Beauchesne clearly lists the word "coward" as being unparliamentary. The accusation that a member or members lack courage is a clear implication of cowardice, and I ask the Chair to apply that logic.

If the hon. member for Saskatoon West has not already convinced the Chair that there is merit in his submission, certainly I suggest that there is merit in my submission to the Chair, that the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) be asked to withdraw a reference he made in today's question period to a member or members moving motions under Standing Order 43 because they lacked the courage to put questions.

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, in a brief word or two I should like to support the position taken by the hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and to urge that when the record is available Your Honour study it and see if something should not be said tomorrow about it.

The two points have been made; I simply underline them. On the one hand the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet), in my view, imputed motives to an extent not permitted by the rules. Also he accused certain hon. members on this side of the House of being cowards or of lacking courage. Surely that kind of language is not appropriate, and I hope Your Honour will study the matter overnight.

While Your Honour is looking at the record of today's proceedings, I wish you would also look at the answer made by the same Postmaster General to the question put to him by the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne). I think Your Honour will find that nowhere in the answer given by the minister was the question itself answered. The minister simply used the question for the purpose of making a statement. If the minister wants to make a statement he can do so on statements by ministers, but he should not bootleg it in, in that way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, obviously, it is not a question of privilege. The hon. member complains that the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) replied to him that, in some cases, members opposite used that famous motion moved under Standing Order 43 for partisan purposes, but that they did not follow up with questions to the minister, thus preventing him from retorting to allegations which at times are far from the truth. So, I fail to see how an allegation made by the Postmaster General to the effect that they lack courage violates the members' privileges.

The hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) said that to lack courage in English is synonymous with "coward", but I think