

Order Paper Questions

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has demonstrated the desirability of this matter being referred to a standing committee so that a comparison can be made of the various inserts that we have had in old age pension and family allowance envelopes for the past number of months.

Mr. Broadbent: With Saskatchewan, too.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Most members in the House get these inserts either in their old age pension cheques or their family allowance cheques. I accept in general the statement made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare that most of the inserts have been based on matters that have been the subject of legislation by this parliament. But it takes an exception to test the rule. I wonder about the insert a couple of months ago which was sent to all old age pensioners, entitled "On Bird Watching". It was a catchy title and those of us who received it took a good look at it, but apparently it had to do with watching a bird, namely, a chicken or a turkey, being cooked. Was that based on legislation?

An hon. Member: Liberals have a monopoly on turkeys.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The point raised initially by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) was a question of privilege having to do with a specific mailing over the signature of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) with family allowance and old age pension cheques. It did not refer to previous examples, and I would want to make sure that the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby has raised a grievance, a matter of discussion or a matter of debate rather than a question of privilege. What is happening is that all hon. members who are getting into the discussion on the procedural point are proceeding to debate the matter, which persuades me more and more that it is a matter of debate and not a question of procedure. If there is a question of procedure involved, I would certainly like to hear it.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I quite agree with Your Honour that the leader of this party raised a specific point and that is what this point of privilege is all about. I was simply dealing with an attempt by the Minister of National Health and Welfare to bring in these other leaflets. I suggest that the one telling us how to cook chicken and turkey was not based on any legislation passed by this parliament.

The point about this leaflet entitled "A Message from the Prime Minister" is that it does not even pretend to be addressed to old age pensioners or family allowance recipients; it does not pretend to have anything to do with the work of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Some of the leaflets that have been inserted have had a relationship; this one has no connection at all. As for the argument that it is simply a description of the legislation, that does not stand up at all even when one reads it in cursory fashion. I suggest that the sum of money involved in doing this, and the abuse of the rights of members of parliament being indulged in by the Prime Minister, warrant a study of this matter by a special committee of the House. The real issue is that the government has taken advantage of its envelopes and its eight-cent postage to

send out material that is purely propaganda and is not informational material for old age pensioners or family allowance recipients at all.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I find it a little difficult to speak after having heard the declaration of the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent). However we, the members of the Social Credit Party of Canada, are also members of the opposition but, to be honest, one must say that the message which was sent, and I read it several times, should have informed the people not about the intention of the government, but about its accomplishments.

Lots of people in Canada do not get newspaper and do not know what they are entitled to receive every month, whether \$129, or \$121, or \$138, or \$133.40 for their old age security and whatever.

I congratulate the government for its honesty in sending a message to these people so that they know what to expect, what they have left for living.

And I think that the motion presented by the leader of the New Democratic Party is completely out of order in terms of the Canadian people's well-being. What the federal government does by way of legislation, respecting, among others the Department of National Health and Welfare, must be proven particularly in the province of Quebec.

● (1520)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: As I indicated earlier, it is my impression that the conduct of an individual member in perhaps breaching any regulations which he may come under may be from time to time a matter of complaint, a specific charge, grievance, debate, public comment, and so on. In my opinion, it would take the most exceptional conduct to constitute even a prima facie case of privilege which ought to be referred to a standing committee.

The question of cost has been raised, and there seems to be some initial difficulty with that argument. The fact that the flier was not sent out in a separate envelope, under separate postage and expense, but was something included with something which was going to be sent out any way appeared somehow a fundamental argument as to cost.

My initial reaction is that this is a matter of grievance, debate and comment rather than a question of privilege. However, I feel that the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) has raised it in seriousness and perhaps I ought to examine the pamphlet and reflect on the matter for 24 hours before making a final ruling as to whether this constitutes a prima facie question of privilege. Accordingly, I will give my ruling tomorrow at three o'clock.

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[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)