

primal scream therapy, but it occurs to me as a member of this House that we also have rights here. You mentioned other members have questions of privilege they want to raise and their rights are being affected by the fact that they cannot speak. I seem to remember a time not very long ago when we discussed things other than questions of privilege in this House, and that was not the only other item of business being delayed by these questions of privilege.

I would like to ask you, Madam Speaker, to consider on behalf of all members of the House whether it would not be possible for you, on the basis of the initial arguments being put forward by a member, to determine whether or not there is a prima facie case. I can think of very few forums, courts or institutions in which I have operated, very few caucuses, very few democratic forums, city councils or trade union meetings that I have attended where there is an assumption that each and every member has the right to expound on his own private theories or concerns at whatever length they choose while the rest of the country sits back and waits for the process to end.

It would seem to me in this context the Chair has a certain responsibility at a very early stage of the presentation of an argument to determine whether or not the case is spurious, simply made for the purpose of using up time or making a private point, or whether in fact there is a genuine argument being put forward. I admit that is a difficult task for the Chair, and I certainly admit the Chair has been put in a difficult position over the last few days, but I would say to all members of the House that at some point—only time will tell when that point comes—we have to ask ourselves how long we as a chamber can function when, for the fifth day, now we find ourselves unable to contemplate our own business and the only thing we can contemplate is the navel of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, and I object to that. I think the Chair has a role in seeing that every question of privilege does not go on for half an hour and then finding that, in a strict procedural sense, there is nothing the Chair can do about it. I think we have an obligation not to use up that time before we come to the end of the road and find nothing there. There is a need for the House to get on with its business, and I would hope that the Chair would bear that in mind.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I cannot let the remarks made by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) go by unchallenged. He, of course, is a new member here and is not aware of the history of his own party in raising points of order like this. I see he has made his brief contribution and disappeared from the House. I would point out to him that he raised a question of privilege with respect to the establishment of regional ministers, one of whom was appointed, amongst others, for every constituency in Ontario and Quebec by this Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—a radical departure from practices in the past. And that member, with other contributors, took up some two hours on his question of privilege. Yet he is asking you, Madam Speaker, to judge that while he has the intellectual capacity to raise questions of privilege deserving of serious consideration, no one else here has.

Point of Order—Mr. Rae

This period in which we find ourselves was commenced with a question of privilege raised by myself, which the Chair still has under consideration, concerning the abuse of taxpayers' funds and the illegal use thereof in establishing constituency offices, impeding my activities as a Member of Parliament. He cannot now stand there and say that these questions of privilege are spurious; he contributed to that very question of privilege. Indeed, Madam Speaker, he cannot complain about you not coming to quick decisions because his contribution was terminated by the Chair on that occasion.

Speaking of navels, Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the parliamentary navel of the NDP is so minute that it would take their combined intellect and they would all still have the room to wear an extra hat inside it.

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, I am a new member here, not as studied as the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), but the role of the Speaker is clearly defined in Section 84, page 25 of *Beauchesne's*. It is quite simple and contradicts the implication of the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) that you should be able to make a snap decision on these matters. It says:

The Speaker requires to be satisfied, both that privilege appears to be sufficiently involved to justify him in giving such precedence . . . and also that the matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity.

To judge whether a question of privilege is involved requires that you yield to that member sufficient time to make his case. That is quite clearly set out in *Beauchesne's*, and I hope we will not be subjected to further unnecessary interventions from the member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Madam Speaker: It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m. this evening.

At 6 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. At six o'clock I was about to respond to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) wherein he suggested that it should be in the hands of the Speaker to do something about containing—and I do not remember his words—certain questions of privilege.

I just want to say to the hon. member that it is not possible for the Speaker to change any of the rules or to make any suggestion in this respect. I am presiding over the deliberations of the House according to the rules which have been set by the House of Commons. If the House of Commons wants to do anything about this, if it has any suggestions, I am in the hands of the House. I am its servant; I am not its master. So, I must respond to the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood in this sense.