

Privilege

Mr. Speaker, what my colleague of Laurier—Sainte-Marie did—

Mr. Speaker: I understand very well the position of the hon. member for Shefford, but I have a question for all the members who gave me notice of a question of privilege.

Is it the position of my colleagues from the Bloc? And if so, why should I have to hear the same argument from each and every colleague, and member?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, your approach to the Bloc Québécois is somewhat unpredictable. Today, you ask me to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, although usually, you ask me to speak as an independent. The fact is that today, I speak as an independent member who happens to belong to the Bloc Québécois. I am sure my colleagues have their own personal privileges that may be affected, and I would not presume to speak on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I may recall the customary procedure in the Quebec National Assembly, because it is quite relevant here. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park referred to a second oath sworn by the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie. Although the Crown is indivisible, the fact is that for years, each member of the Quebec National Assembly has sworn two oaths. Each member of Cabinet swears three oaths. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read this to you because there are precedents.

When my colleague from Hull—Aylmer was a distinguished member of the National Assembly, he swore his two oaths, and he was never accused of *lèse-majesté*. The fact is, and I would like to read this to you, since 1982 members of the Quebec National Assembly have been asked to swear a second oath. Section 15 of the National Assembly Act provides that a member may not sit in the Assembly until he has sworn the oath or made the solemn statement provided under Schedule 1. Mr. Speaker, Schedule 1 contains the oath or solemn statement, which reads as follows: "I swear I shall be loyal to the people of Quebec and will perform my duties as a member honestly and fairly, in accordance with the Quebec Constitution." Mr. Speaker, according to the manual, members of the National Assembly must also

swear the oath of allegiance to the Queen prescribed in section 128 of the British North America Act.

However, one does not exclude the other. An oath of allegiance to one's homeland has been deemed to be constitutional, has been accepted for years, and I cannot accept that today, a procedure is being challenged that has been followed since 1982. Mr. Speaker, if people were more aware of what has happened in Quebec in recent years, they would be more attuned to the political, legal and economic realities of Quebec. Unfortunately, the hon. member is not, because this has been a common procedure since 1982, and no one has ever challenged the right of a member of the National Assembly to sit in the Assembly, to be democratically elected and to be a faithful defender of the interests of his homeland.

Mr. Speaker, I will not bore you with a description of the situation in other countries, but I would like to recall the situation in Great Britain. To our friends who sought refuge during the past few days in the monarchy and the Queen's prerogatives, I would like to say, especially to the hon. member for York South—Weston, that in Great Britain, members of the nationalist Welsh and Scottish parties were elected to the British House of Commons and sat in the House after swearing their oaths. Better still, members of the Labour Party, who have a certain philosophy in common with the Liberal Party, campaign against the monarchy in every election but they still sit in the British House of Commons.

To be helpful, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the oath of allegiance, as prescribed by law and by the Constitution, was respected. A person can swear allegiance to the Queen because she represents the people. We certainly do not place our trust in the monarchy. We place our trust in the people of Quebec, the people we represent, and we do so proudly in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments. I do not think I need to hear more arguments on this issue. I do understand the position of the hon. member for Shefford. I also understand the position of the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park and probably also the opinions, views, and behaviour of all the other members in this House. But I would like to make a suggestion. Of course, when we have to deal with such an important issue, it is appropriate for the Chair to reserve its decision. For the record, it would probably