

*Privilege—Mr. Robinson*

were concerned that line officers and so on should be able to testify freely without any suggestion that senior officials might in any way be influencing their evidence. That was done and those officials did not attend any hearings of the committee.

There were two events which took place that Monday which in my view constitute a very grave situation, and at least one of which gives rise to a breach of the privileges of Members of this House, in particular Members of the standing committee.

First, the committee learned that on the eve of our visit to Millhaven institution, six prisoners were transferred from Millhaven to Kingston Penitentiary. To be precise, this was done two days before we arrived. One of those six was one of two members of the inmates committee elected at large by all the inmates, a Mr. John Avery. Certainly the timing of that transfer was at the very least coincidental. We were told it was done for security reasons. The individuals involved were a negative influence in the institution and for that reason the institution was not prepared to agree to transferring Avery back so the committee could meet with the full inmates committee. However, there was a conference call and Avery was on the line from Kingston Penitentiary to Millhaven.

In the course of that transfer, documents that Avery wanted to present to members of the committee were left behind. I asked the warden of Millhaven whether we might obtain those documents with the written authorization of the prisoner involved. I was told that was not possible because the prisoner was in Kingston Penitentiary. I then asked that the documents be sent to Kingston Penitentiary and that the prisoner have an opportunity to give them to me as a member of the committee. He wanted to do that to assist us in our work.

The documents were sent over, the prisoner went to the box in which the documents were located and discovered that four of his file folders containing critical information he wanted to bring to the attention of the committee had disappeared.

That is a rather serious matter. A prisoner wants to present evidence to a parliamentary committee. He is moved from the institution where we were to meet with him to Kingston Penitentiary and his documents were not moved with him. When those documents finally come into his hands so he could present them to a member of the committee for circulation among members of the committee, four of his key file folders had disappeared.

That is the first point, and the only possible conclusion one can draw, since those documents were in the custody of the Correctional Services of Canada, is that for some reason they were deliberately removed from his file. If there is another explanation I would welcome it, but what other conclusion can there be?

The next matter I want to draw to Your Honour's attention is one from which by far the most serious conclusions must be drawn. On Monday evening the seven members of the standing committee had a meeting with some 20 parole officers as well as a number of senior parole supervisors and the District

Director of the Eastern Region of CSC Parole. At that meeting we were addressed by the senior officials of the parole service. Following their presentation, there were some questions and answers and they withdrew. At that point the committee was left with approximately 20 parole officers, full-time employees of CSC involved in parole supervision. These are professionals, a number of them with many years of dedicated service in the field.

These people indicated first that they had some difficulty in even getting agreement to a meeting without their supervisors being present. They indicated that initially their supervisors insisted that two of them be present and that only two parole officers be present during the meeting with the committee, and that those four appear at the same time. The clerk of our committee, after consulting with the chairperson, made it very clear to the officials that that was not acceptable. We wanted to give the line staff an opportunity to appear directly in front of the committee. We rejected the attempt by management to insist that they appear at the same time.

• (1530)

During that meeting with the approximately 20 parole officers a variety of concerns were expressed with regard to their intolerable caseloads, the implications of privatization, and inadequate resources to do the job which they have been asked to do on behalf of society.

During the course of the presentations to our committee one individual indicated that two meetings had been held the previous week involving individuals who would be appearing before our committee. One meeting was held with the parole officers, the line people about whom I spoke. Attending that meeting were a number of individuals from national headquarters in Ottawa, including a gentleman named Moe Royer who I believe is the Commissioner's executive assistant, a number of other officials from national headquarters, and some officials from regional headquarters.

They met with the parole officers and I understand that at that meeting they discussed the manner in which public servants might appropriately give evidence before a standing committee of Parliament. A legal opinion was apparently handed out at that time prepared by the Privy Council Office indicating what was and was not acceptable in terms of giving evidence. I do not believe that there was any threat, intimidation, or suggestion with regard to the giving of evidence at that meeting. Indeed, I believe that one individual at that meeting suggested that people should feel free to give their evidence in a candid manner. At that particular meeting there was no attempt whatsoever to influence the way in which evidence was given.

However, one parole officer did inform the committee that his supervisor had attended a separate meeting last week. In attendance at that separate meeting were senior management officials from the Ontario regional office including the Deputy Regional Commissioner, Jim Phelps. I believe that Mr. Don