

Privilege

check *Hansard* and see that the government House leader quoted directly from this letter.

It is crystal clear that the communications manager of the Charest campaign, Mr. Ralfe, his law firm, which I have just named, and the government House leader are acting in consort in attempting to intimidate and prevent a member of Parliament from doing his job and to undertake his duties.

Madam Speaker, I ask you to investigate this co-ordinated attempt to shut up a member of Parliament, to introduce libel chill. If you find a prima facie case for this question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

I ask the government House leader to table the letter he quoted from in Question Period. It will be crystal clear that it is exactly the same document I myself only received a minute or two before Question Period. Clearly he had it in his hands. As part of a co-ordinated attempt to shut down, to intimidate, to shut up a member of Parliament who is doing his job, the minister opposite chose to use it. I am sure by now he regrets his rather foolish action.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, finally at the end we got the truth.

Indeed I was told that this letter had been given to the member.

Mr. Tobin: You have it.

Mr. Andre: I was given a copy of the letter and he admitted that he received the letter before Question Period. I received it after it was sent to him.

The quote I read—and he can check the “blues”—was right from the document the hon. member circulated. The point is the quote is exactly what I read from the letter. It was exactly out of this document. The word is this:

Ralfe whose contracts exceeded \$50,000 in the last fiscal year, had his contract renewed in April. Although he seems to be working full time on the Charest campaign, Ralfe has an active contract with the department.

That is a false statement.

The hon. member distributed this false information outside in the lobby during the scrums endeavouring to ruin another reputation. Somehow he thinks it enhances the political system and his own reputation by going out and spreading false information.

I will let the recipient or victim of this deal with it on his own.

• (1205)

I maintain the point is that the level of respect in which this institution is held is not aided by hon. members using parliamentary immunity to stand up and slander individuals who do not have the privilege of coming in to defend themselves. I will let the hon. member deal with that.

In any event, at no time did I hear in his comments anything having to do with the rules of privilege in this House. I fail to understand what his point of privilege would be in respect to how he was prevented from doing his duty in the House by whatever is happening.

He has the letter in his hand and if he chooses to table it he may do so. I do not care. The point is I believe the letter deals with what the hon. member said in particular out in the scrum by handing out material which is slanderous and wrong.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, I think the electronic *Hansard* will show that during Question Period the minister did quote directly from a two-page letter. I believe that the tradition of the House is that when a minister or a member quotes from a document that person is required to table that document.

I would ask that the minister table the document he used in his response, which was a two-page letter.

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Madam Speaker, in your examination of this letter I would also draw to your attention the fact that my hon. friend opposite indicated that the Liberal Party does have people sitting in the gallery who are reading mail and the documents that ministers have in front of them. If there was ever a question of privilege to be raised that ought to be it.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I think when deciding upon this decision there are two points which you might want to consider.

The first thing that you might want to consider, Madam Speaker, is whether this is an attempt to intimidate an MP in the exercise of his function.

The second point to consider is the fact that the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte was served with this letter from this law firm here on Parliament Hill. As Madam Speaker will be well aware, a member cannot be served with a legal notice of this nature here if it is a court document. In a civil case that cannot be done on Parliament Hill. Given the fact that it cannot be done,