

Privilege—Mr. Thacker

Member is running into that kind of trouble in getting his Bills drafted. I know that in that particular section we have run into some difficulties with some of the staff having to absent themselves—

Mr. Rose: Yes, everyone quits. That is what your difficulty is.

Madam Speaker:—and at least one having resigned to take another position which he thought was more in line with his interests. I knew that there was a bit of a backlog, but I did not know that it had inconvenienced Hon. Members to the extent that the Hon. Member would want to raise the matter in the House. I must tell him that he could raise it with me privately in my chambers, and I will certainly see to it that he gets his Bill or Bills drafted in the time that he needs them. If necessary, I will seek help from other services in order to satisfy Hon. Members.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I rise on the question of privilege.

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Nielsen: I do not believe the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) had finished his comments, but it raises a serious question of privilege—

Mr. Smith: Filibuster!

Mr. Nielsen:—in my submission. I hear the Parliamentary Secretary saying “filibuster!” He is not concerned with the rights of Parliamentarians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: The provision of services by the law branch of the House of Commons is very much a matter within the particular bailiwick of each and every Member of Parliament. I have heard more than one complaint from Hon. Members who have not been able to get their legislation drafted. As Your Honour knows, it has now been three months since Mr. Maingot has left and his position is still vacant. Surely, it cannot be all that difficult to fill a position of director of the House of Commons law branch, which is specifically charged with providing services to all Members of Parliament.

Then, too, I am aware that Professor Franks of Queen's University was commissioned to prepare a study. I am afraid I do not know who commissioned it. Perhaps the Office of the Chair commissioned that study. However, that study should be available and should be read by all Members of Parliament. For that purpose, it is my personal submission to Your Honour that the Franks report should be tabled so that it is available to all Members of Parliament.

Lastly, I suggest that any critiques which have been prepared of the Franks study should also be made available to all Members of Parliament so that we know where we are going

with respect to the future of his very vital service of the House of Commons law branch to Members of Parliament.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Speaker: Is the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) rising on a point of order or a question of privilege?

Mr. Thacker: On the question of privilege, Madam Speaker. I believe, just from your own words, it has been shown that there is a prima facie case, and the question is not whether or not you try to solve it by meeting privately with me, or whether, by a motion, it is put before the proper committee so that all sides of the House—

Madam Speaker: No, I said it did not touch on privilege. The particular complaint which the Hon. Member was making did not touch on privilege, but I did say that I would be glad to discuss with him how we can solve this problem.

For the benefit of the Hon. Member for Yukon, I can tell him that the post of law clerk has been filled on an interim basis. The post was not left vacant; it was filled on an interim basis by another member of the personnel. Therefore, it was not left completely in abeyance. However, the Hon. Member is right in saying that it should be filled. At any rate, those are problems of administration which Hon. Members know should not be taken up and discussed in the House.

Mr. Benjamin: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nowlan: I have a point of privilege, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I have another notice of a question of privilege by the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone).

● (1530)

MR. MALONE—DRAFTING PRIORITY OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I preface my comments by saying that while you will note some similarity between what I am about to say and the comments of the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker), I believe I can make a distinct difference, in terms of the concept of Private Members' Bills, that will set it apart from what you heard from that Hon. Member.

One of the common understandings of all Members is that we are treated equally. Our chances to raise questions, to raise points of order or questions of privilege, to print Bills or our opportunities to speak, are equal to all.

In making reference to the printing of Private Members' Bills, I want to bring to the attention of you, Madam Speaker, a specific comment of an officer who is in charge of drafting. I want to pause at this point to say that I lay no critique towards those good officers and the hard work that they do in drafting. I would not want any slant of anything I say to reflect on them because I think we are all aware of the fact that the restraints