

Privilege

The question of the oath has been answered. On the second point, the hon. member wants me to apply the rules of the Bar associations of the different provinces to this House. This House is run by the rules of the House, not by the rules of the Bar associations.

I have to tell the hon. member that he does not have a question of privilege on that basis. He did not bring forward any new argument to convince me that he has a question of privilege.

I want members to take note that I have ruled on both those questions of privilege.

REPETITIVE QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Madam Speaker: I have something to say about the number of questions of privilege that I have on the same matter. I think it was demonstrated yesterday, as speakers rose to defend their questions of privilege, that it is difficult for members to argue them without referring to my previous rulings and also without repeating the arguments which other colleagues have already put forward in their presentations.

Because I cannot allow members to comment on my rulings or refer to them during the debate which follows, I realize that members will be obliged to repeat those same arguments. In fact, three members in a row have repeated the arguments, and the Chair is placed in the peculiar position of having to listen to the same argument on each question of privilege that is raised. The Chair must listen to all members who give notice of a question of privilege. There is no doubt about that according to our Standing Orders. However, the Standing Orders do not provide that the Chair must listen to the same questions several times over. If I read the wording governing questions of privilege, it would be quite obvious to them that in this case we have questions of privilege that are all similar. I do not find it said anywhere that the Chair must listen to the same question of privilege several times over.

Because it will be difficult to pursue these questions of privilege without repeating the arguments and referring to the rulings that I have made, I am going to ask the hon. members who have submitted questions of privilege on the matter of the Constitution to withdraw them voluntarily.

I think hon. members realize that they themselves will have difficulty defending them, and it will be practically impossible to deal with these questions of privilege because of the constraint I will have to put on members regarding the repetition of arguments and reference to my rulings. Therefore, I ask those members who have submitted questions of privilege to withdraw them voluntarily. I will commence with the question of privilege of the hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker).

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, before putting that proposal to hon. members, because of the rather unusual course which the Chair might be embarking upon, may I suggest that perhaps the more proper course to follow would be to hear members individually.

I say that for two reasons. First, while it is totally improper for an hon. member to question or comment negatively on the Chair's ruling, there is certainly no stricture on an hon. member to comment favourably on the Chair's ruling. We are doing it all the time by referring to precedents.

Second, and perhaps more important, the Standing Order requiring notice to be given of questions of privilege requires that notice be accompanied by a brief statement of the subject matter of the question of privilege intended to be raised. Given that a notice you have contains a brief statement—I do not know what kind of statement is contained in the notice but I assume it is brief, consisting of one or two sentences—it seems to me that the fairer practice might be, rather than embarking upon a totally new precedent which may prove to be undesirable in the future, at least to hear the hon. member who has given notice until such time as the Chair determines it is, in fact, the same question with which the Chair has already dealt. Therefore, it seems to me it would be fairer for the hon. member who has given notice to be allowed to develop his submissions to you to the point where the Chair finds there is duplication.

I think it would be extremely undesirable if the Chair were to rule now that there was a discretion in the Chair simply to read the notice, accompanied by the brief statement required under our rules, and to rule on the acceptability of a question of privilege merely on the basis of the notice and the brief statement.

● (1550)

I therefore urge you, Madam Speaker, to hear the hon. member at least until the Chair has formed an opinion one way or another that there is a duplication, at which time I totally agree that the Chair would be justified in saying the matter is intruding upon subject matter that the Chair has already rendered a ruling upon. I think the hon. member should be allowed to proceed to that extent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Olivier (Longueuil): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to take up some of your time with this matter, but I believe that it is extremely important to remind the House of what you have just said in effect that when the similarity among several questions of privilege is such that only a few words differ, it is obvious, normal and also logical for you to make a ruling on all of them at the same time.

I believe that if you could not make a ruling on all of them at one time, the privileges of the House as a whole might be threatened since every hon. member is a legislator, and as such, has the right to speak on legislative measures and not only on points of order or questions of privilege.

The problem, Madam Speaker, is that if you are not given the right to make a ruling on a group of similar questions of privilege which contain about the same words, we shall be prevented as legislators from playing the role for which we