

Cloutier was a member of Robert Bourassa's government. Mr. Cloutier moved on to some other cabinet responsibilities, and I am sure the situation continued. Serge Raymond, the RCMP source contact in this ministry, was used by the force to assist in eradicating Parti Québécois elements in the Liberal party, as far as federal and provincial government departments were concerned. His handler, an RCMP member named Michel Papineau, who incidentally is no longer in the force, would go to Mr. Raymond and designate or finger someone who was not acceptable. It was Mr. Raymond's job to get rid of that person, using his political connections.

A lot of concern was expressed by serving members of the RCMP that this process may have been abused. One can see readily the tremendous capacity for abuse in this type of situation. I do not believe that the Solicitor General is aware of this situation, as far as I know. Certainly if he was, he had ample opportunity to put this on the record when he was questioned.

● (1552)

The implications of this are mind boggling as far as I am concerned. To think that this sort of situation could be permitted to exist on the basis of someone being designated, without any opportunity to defend themselves—perhaps not even knowing about it—relates back to the same sort of mentality we saw in this House in the operation of the so-called "black list" which was distributed, apparently, to his cabinet colleagues by the then minister of supply and services.

I hope that the Solicitor General and the McDonald commission will take the opportunity to look into this and ask these men, Messrs. Goguen, Papineau and Raymond, some very pertinent questions about what was going on. Perhaps the Keable inquiry will do it.

Getting back to this particular motion, we must keep in mind that what is asked here is that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for action and decision. It was the government that talked this matter out last night. Why is the government so reluctant to carry out this straightforward exercise? Why do we have such a committee in the first place, if access to it is so jealously guarded by the government majority for what surely can only be for political purposes? After all, they control the committee. Does the Deputy Prime Minister or his parliamentary secretary hold a committee in this place in such little regard that they do not trust it to look into a matter such as this, particularly when it is dominated by their own colleagues? Obviously, as in the case of the question of privilege by the hon. member for Nickel Belt, the government seeks to use its majority to block a very necessary function of parliament.

I urge members opposite to reconsider their position. If precedents such as this are allowed to pile up, they will not only be counterproductive to the operations of this House but they will undermine, to some extent, the status of the Speaker, who made the ruling, in the first instance that there was a "prima facie" question of privilege. If the Speaker makes such a ruling—and I agree that perhaps some unfortunate implica-

tions have been drawn from this matter, which is the only thing I can agree with in the speech of my friend opposite who spoke just before me—and it is systematically blocked by the members of this House, there is no point in making a ruling. It becomes a very trivial and redundant procedure when it should not be, and it reflects on the Chair.

The people of Canada who are watching right now the proceedings of what many have called, with some justification, the highest court in the land, must wonder what we are now doing here. The member opposite has said that we are wasting our time. I disagree. I think that this is one of the most important debates that this parliament has had recently. The only way we could be wasting our time would be if it becomes apparent that this government will not allow the opportunity for this important matter to be looked into by a committee set up for that purpose and staffed by members of this House from all parties. What could be more logical than that? What could be more illogical than the action of this government in impeding and undermining a very important parliamentary process, which ultimately undermines the position of the Chair as well?

Mr. Raines: Will the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay) permit a very brief question?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, I would be glad to accept a question.

Mr. Raines: Mr. Speaker, I found the argument put forth by the hon. member for Central Nova very persuasive. If this was a matter that was more clearcut, that is, if it was simply between the Solicitor General or anybody in the cabinet and any member of the opposition, then I could see that it would be a matter which could go before the committee on privileges and elections for decision. However, in this case we have an alleged link between the RCMP, a member of cabinet, and a member of the opposition, and if there were an inquiry before the committee all the witnesses would be needed. There is already an exhaustive inquiry in process, the McDonald inquiry. I am sure that the hon. member is not denigrating the McDonald inquiry, but in light of all these facts why would he want to bring this matter before a committee of this House?

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, that is a very fair question. Of course I am not denigrating the McDonald commission, but neither am I upgrading it to the extent to where I think that it should be allowed to be equal to parliament in dealing with the privileges of the members of this House.

With regard to the link, it is simply this: the Solicitor General is one of us in this House and he has been apparently misled by our national police force. As a consequence he has, in turn, done something which has affected the privileges of another member of the House. I believe that such a situation is definitely within the jurisdiction and ambit of this place and is definitely of interest primarily to this place. The McDonald commission may not even be constituted at this time next year. It is a very worth-while body, but it comes and goes, as do all other royal commissions.