

In the response by the minister dated September 26 to this question, the minister stated: "The regulations are not being enforced by the RCMP".

Surely it is a sad day in this country when a Canadian citizen wishes to stand silently and peacefully in front of the Parliament Buildings and express his views with respect to government policy, and that person is arrested as a criminal and taken away in an RCMP vehicle. That is not acceptable in Canada today.

I want to ask for clear direction from the Chair. Will the Speaker make it very clear to the RCMP, since it is the Speaker who is responsible for the precincts of this House, that this kind of conduct is unacceptable, that it is totally inappropriate for any individual to be arrested when that individual is silently and peacefully standing on Parliament Hill, exercising his or her freedom of speech in conformity with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Will the Speaker give that direction to all Canadians, particularly to the RCMP, and will he ensure that no further arrests will be made of those who are seeking to exercise freedom of speech in this country?

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): I rise on the same question, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to add my voice to the question raised by my hon. friend opposite and tell you that I also witnessed the scene. The thought that came to my mind was that we have lost a little bit of democracy today.

• (1510)

Things were very peaceful, and all of a sudden an RCMP officer who had been told to do so—I am not particularly angry with the action of the policeman because obviously he was following orders—arrested the gentleman in question when he was doing absolutely nothing that was criminal or violent. If one person's rights and freedoms in this nation are in peril, then the rights and freedoms of us all are in peril.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question.

Mr. Speaker: Very briefly. I have the point.

Mr. Kilgour: I join with my colleagues on both ends of the House. I think you and I have discussed this matter before. I realize that you do not have jurisdiction outside

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the building and that you may feel, therefore, you can say nothing about this matter.

As was just put my colleagues, all our rights are affected when a priest and today Mr. Kealey can be dragged away for not obeying a lawful order. I understand the police cannot give what the basis of that lawful order is.

Mr. Speaker: Let me deal with this point first of all. As is perhaps not as well known as should be, the Speaker's jurisdiction ends at the building wall. It does not extend out on to the grounds.

Second, I do not know what the circumstances were and I cannot sit in judgment as to whether the arrest was within the law or outside the law.

Third, the hon. member raises the matter as a question of privilege. There may or may not be a legitimate complaint about the action of the RCMP under the circumstances. That is not for me to rule on.

I have to decide whether the matter that is raised is a question of privilege or a contempt against the House. I have to say that nothing that has happened has made it impossible for any of the three hon. members to rise in this House, to carry on and to do their duties. That is, after all, the essence of what is a privilege. It must be clearly understood that although there may be no sign of prima facie privilege there may be, however, a complaint in another direction.

The hon. members have given some indication of their unhappiness. They of course can take the matter up in other ways, but I do not think they can establish, certainly on what I have heard, a prima facie case of privilege.

With respect to the policy in general here on the Hill, hon. members know that it is a matter from time to time of considerable concern. I certainly will discuss the matter further with colleagues in the Board of Internal Economy.

I also want to say—and this does not necessarily reflect on the facts that took place today because I am not sitting in judgment of them—that there are security problems. They are very real. One way or another, in the final analysis the Speaker is responsible for the security of all members, at least when inside the building. This is a matter which gives the Speaker some difficulty because there is this dividing line.