

Privilege—Mr. Cooper

Mr. Deans: Rather, all that should be required, I suggest, would be that the Speaker determine that the Member is in a position to provide the name in the event the case he has placed before the House is deemed to be a breach of privilege. I understand from a brief check that he is in a position to provide the name should the Speaker determine that all other matters relating to these particular circumstances are as the Hon. Member described them.

● (1530)

The question surely is not a partisan one. The question is not whether the Minister has done a good job or otherwise. The question before us is whether the privileges of the Members of the House, all Members of the House, are being breached in circumstances such as these.

I would suggest, if I may, that quite clearly what the Hon. Member has raised, if it were to occur to any other Member on either side of the House, would constitute a breach of privilege. I assume the Hon. Member has raised it not only because it affects him directly. If it can be shown that it is a practice being followed by this individual or other individuals in informing Hon. Members of the House of Commons that their access to information will no longer be there in the event that they should raise a question which displeases the head of a Crown corporation, or for that matter anyone else, quite clearly that would be a breach of everyone's privilege.

What is being asked for is a recognition that to breach the privileges of one Member is to breach the privileges of all Members. Therefore, the argument surely ought not to be whether the Hon. Member has courage in naming the individual who did it. It is simply a matter of whether the Member has in fact had his privileges breached. After listening to the case he put forward, I suggest that the threat has clearly breached his privileges. If he is now in a position, should the Speaker find that he has had his privileges breached, to provide the name, as he obviously must do in order for the matter to be dealt with, he can simply acknowledge that he could provide the name if the Speaker requires it. He need not provide the name today, but at a subsequent point of time if the Speaker requires the name in order that a proper inquiry could be held before the appropriate committee. To bring this matter down to a level of partisan politics would be wrong.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, as well-meaning as the suggestion was from the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain, and I agree with everything he said except where he suggested the Chair should put itself in the position of requiring the Hon. Member for Peace River to produce the name—

Mr. Deans: I didn't say that.

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect to the Hon. Member, the Chair has heard the point and will of course be very careful on a matter of that nature.

Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I had no foreknowledge whatsoever of the case being brought by the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper). As a Member of

this House, I am stunned by his case. I am very impressed and worried about the implications of his comments on what was attempted. I am therefore quite surprised when Members opposite, for some reason totally beyond me, miss the key point raised by the Hon. Member for Peace River, who did not name the human being involved but who referred specifically to the office held by the person who telephoned the Hon. Member for Peace River.

When the "blues" are checked by Members opposite, who have said, apparently, as I understand their case, that unless the Hon. Member for Peace River names the person, there is no case of privilege, the logic of their case when they read the "blues" will be to find that the Hon. Member for Peace River has named the officer and the office of the officer. Surely dignity says that is precisely what a Member of the House of Commons should do because the Member has put to some degree his case and his credibility forward. He has made a claim about an officer of the Canada Post Corporation.

Surely that claim should convince Members opposite that the Hon. Member for Peace River is prepared to back his assertion. If the assertion is found to be true, it should bother even Liberals to know that officers of Crown corporations may be attempting to influence the spoken views of Members of Parliament. That alone should convince Members on the opposite bench that this case should be looked at.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet) mentioned the serious and elaborate approach taken by the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) in his statement. He said he was making enquiries to get a better picture of what was happening at Canada Post.

[English]

I have given weight to the suggestion of the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), given the gravity of the charges, that the Minister should have an opportunity to make further inquiries. I will take the matter under consideration. It is obviously one that will be examined closely. The Chair will not render a decision at this time.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, are we to understand that after the Minister has completed his inquiry you will allow him, if need be, to come back and give some explanation because the last Hon. Member to speak indicated that the office had been mentioned? I am told that more than one person holds that office. Rather than try to give civility to some so-called threatener, it would be much simpler if the name of the person were to be mentioned. Since it has not been mentioned, the Minister should be allowed to make his inquiry and speak here before you make your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: That was what the Chair had in mind, precisely that. Obviously the House will have to give its consent to hear the Minister's statement. The Chair has indicated that is the course it would like to follow at this point.