

Privilege—Mr. Stanley Knowles

o'clock and, although he still held his card telling him which seat he could occupy, the list of persons who were to be present at that ceremony did not include his name.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mrs. Campagnolo) was there—she is present in the chamber today—and my hon. friend from the Northwest Territories told me that after the occasion was over, when he saw her, she said to him “Wally, if I had known you were here I would have mentioned you”.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend believes the reason the minister did not know he was there was because his name was not on the list of invited guests. Although many officials at the territorial and municipal level were introduced, the hon. member for Northwest Territories was not introduced or mentioned in any way.

In addition, there was a reception of the usual kind given by the government of the Northwest Territories in Hay River on Monday night, to which anybody who had any kind of official status at the territorial or municipal level was invited. Also invited were former representatives of the Northwest Territories and at least one former member of parliament from the Northwest Territories. A former Governor General was there, too. All these people were invited, but the hon. member for the Northwest Territories was not.

An hon. Member: A shameful Grit trick!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My friends in the Progressive Conservative party are trying to put the blame on the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport. My hon. friend from the Northwest Territories does not do that. He thinks she is on his side and that it is the local people, in charge of a project funded by government money, who are snubbing him and, what is worse, interfering with the election process.

I do not mind snubbing. I can take it. We all get it now and then. It is part of our occupation; our skin is not that thin. But when an invitation is rescinded and everyone else is invited, and when an hon. member who represents the largest constituency in Canada is not invited to a ceremony in his own constituency, it becomes an affront which I am sure the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport will not condone. In fact, I suspect she will be the first to extend an apology to the hon. member for Northwest Territories when he returns.

What I think is really serious is that local people who are operating a function which is largely, if not wholly, funded by federal money, should use their position to intimidate a person or group of persons in connection with the election process. At that point it becomes a matter of privilege as far as this House is concerned.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I suppose it may be said that the New Democratic Party in the Northwest Territories is taking advantage of the fact that many people have come in from all over that vast area and decided that it would be a good time to hold a convention. I think this makes good sense. It probably means saving money, because people might make the trip only once, rather than twice. And to suggest that a convention held in the basement of a motel in Hay River would interfere with the carrying on of the Arctic Winter Games is utter nonsense.

On the other side of the coin, persons like Mr. Stewart, who is president of the Arctic Winter Games Host Society and Mayor of Hay River, by taking these various steps to interfere with the election process are probably infringing the Canada Elections Act itself and this, consequently, is a case of privilege as far as hon. members here are concerned.

● (1522)

The things which have happened are too many for this to be accidental. There was the written invitation. It was not just one of those printed cards which might go to anyone. It was a personal letter. There was an acceptance. Then there was the telephone call saying that unless this convention was postponed the invitation would be rescinded. There were calls not only to the hon. member's office in this building but also to the office of the leader of this party. Then there is the fact that the name was omitted from the list of those attending the opening Sunday afternoon. There is the fact that there was no invitation to attend the reception held by the government of the Northwest Territories on Monday night. As I say, these things add up to an attempt to dissuade a member of this House from pursuing his rightful privilege of being a candidate for nomination for the next parliament.

I felt this matter should be raised without further delay. Obviously, Your Honour would not want to rule until the hon. member himself has returned from the games, and I hope he will be re-nominated tonight. Your Honour would want to look into this, as would the Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport), perhaps the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Faulkner), and perhaps also the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen), who is in charge of the Canada Elections Act. However, I decry in the strongest terms this kind of interference on the part of local officials. Your Honour might, under normal circumstances, tell me to complain to those officials up there, but the fact is they are operating a function which is funded by the federal government.

I decry, in the strongest terms I can use, these practices which interfere with the rights of any citizen but particularly with the right of a member of this House of Commons to seek re-nomination so that he can return to this House. It is a matter which is the cause of a great deal of concern in the north. I have had read to me some of the things that are appearing in the newspapers. There is a feeling that there was an element of discrimination against the hon. member in his own person for certain reasons which I need not state, and I think the matter should be cleared up.