

Privilege

Mr. Speaker, have the right to be represented as long as their representatives in this House are elected democratically and that we are citizens of this country.

In the past few months, we have witnessed deliberate attempts to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the members of this House who do not share the centralizing views of some and the confederative views of others. Mr. Speaker, attempts were made to try and establish that there are good Canadians and not so good ones. I will not tolerate, Mr. Speaker, that our institution allow the right to hold a seat without a collective exercise of soul-searching.

Mr. Speaker, the precedents in this House date back a very long time. The last time the House questioned someone's Oath of Allegiance, it was Louis Riel's. I should like to remind those who today would like to see a repetition of the treatment Louis Riel was subjected to at the time just how severely history has judged Riel's opponents and especially his murderers.

Mr. Speaker, Joseph Howe sat in this House on behalf of Nova Scotia. I should like to remind the hon. member for Cape Breton who was all worked up yesterday when he said that we hardly had the right to sit in the House that Joseph Howe did sit here as an Antifederalist member. I should like to remind him also that several members also sat in the Nova Scotia legislature.

• (1510)

Quebecers were not the first to question the Canadian Federation, Mr. Speaker. As early as 1867, Nova Scotians did just that.

Today, those who are claiming that this situation is unprecedented are lacking in historical perspective and showing no respect for democracy.

I mentioned Louis Riel earlier; he had been elected to the House in 1873 and 1874, and was finally evicted in 1874 in spite of the fact that he had taken the Oath of Allegiance.

As far as the violation of the Oath of Allegiance is concerned, Mr. Speaker—I would not want to quote Beauchesne again—I suggest that the only example which occurred in the past was in 1940 when Fred Rose, who had been elected to the House of Commons, was later on found guilty of spying following his trial which took place in 1946.

Mr. Speaker, if any member of this political group represented in the House has violated the Canadian Constitution, the law of Parliament or the Criminal Code, let the hon. members who are prepared to lay charges do so immediately! Otherwise, as the hon. member for Burin—St. George's yesterday, they would be showing a lack of courage. They claim that they would be ready to vote on—

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but— It is with some concern that I accept the hon. member for Shefford's position as I accept the more general terms of the history of our country, because with some clarity the hon. member touched upon similar situations that occurred in the past.

However, I think the point of my ruling is very clear. After all, I have heard the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park and also the hon. member for Shefford. Other hon. members might have the same question of privilege. Could the hon. member for Shefford explain or perhaps even suggest to me how best the Chair could hear other points, because a lengthy argument may not be necessary if the points are the same.

The hon. member for Shefford.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I understand your interrupting me, but I was just into my introduction.

You asked us to learn about the oath of allegiance, Mr. Speaker; I have researched the subject, prepared myself and am now ready to share the results with you and our colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I will certainly mention precedents because in this House parliamentary law is based for the most part on precedents.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk to you—

Mr. Speaker: Once again, I accept the position of the hon. member for Shefford. But I have a question. The hon. member for Shefford has clearly presented an argument which is very precise, very interesting, very historical. So I wonder, given the thorough argument put forward by the hon. member, if the Chair should have to listen to the same argument over and over again this afternoon.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): I am coming to that, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to tell you about the situation in the provincial legislatures.