

Finally, let me say I agree with the member that this should simply referred back to the committee. It is important for this House to establish and reaffirm the privileges that it has in hearing witnesses and having them freed from a threat of suit which as the member indicated is not likely to have had any force or substance given the rules of this House.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I appreciate the argument that my friend from Victoria has made as well about the “after the fact” alleged threat and its possible chill effect.

I have just had handed to me by my friend from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell a copy of the *Ottawa Sun* article from this morning and a quick glance at it seems to suggest there may be an issue of copyright involved in this. It is not for us to judge that at this point. I think that and other issues raised by my friend from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell would properly be the subject of the committee on privileges and elections.

It seems to me there is a prima facie case here and I would support, if you should so rule, Sir, the referral of the matter to that committee.

• (1020)

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: First of all I thank the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for bringing this matter to the House, the hon. member for Victoria who has made a helpful intervention, and the parliamentary secretary on behalf of the government.

Some mention has been made that this matter arose in a committee and hon. members will have heard me say many times that usually matters should be put back to committee. My own feeling is that under the circumstances which have been explained to me that is not the convenient or appropriate thing to do at this time.

I have listened carefully to what was said. I think this is an appropriate case for the Chair to rule that there is a prima facie case for privilege. I would ask the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to move his motion.

Point of Order

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the matter of the threats by Miss Kelly Crichton against Miss Sheryl Eckstein, a witness before a parliamentary committee, be referred to the Standing Committee on House Management.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the motion. Is the House in agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

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POINT OF ORDER

BILL C-93

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning Bill C-93, an omnibus bill which is to be debated under House orders in a few moments. I want to take this occasion to put some procedural arguments before the Chair.

Six sitting days ago Bill C-93 was first tabled in the House. We are here today and the government wishes to proceed with second reading, which I suggest to the Chair is the most important aspect of a bill. This is where the principles are ascertained, promoted and debated quite vigorously.

In the budget of last February the government announced that for reasons of economy it planned to fold a number of agencies into other agencies or departments doing similar work.

Bill C-93 is intended to give legislative authority to the government's announcement with regard to 10 agencies performing distinctive functions. The long title of Bill C-93, an act to implement certain government organization provisions of the budget tabled in the House of Commons on February 25, 1992, is intended to mask the real complexities of the bill.

It puts forward the fiction that the bill is merely a cost cutting measure eliminating a bunch of redundant or archaic agencies. In fact an examination of the bill reveals that while it does not wind up some agencies thereby saving some money, it also makes major changes to public policy with regard to the role of government. The bill amends or repeals no fewer than 27 existing statutes and enacts one completely new statute.