

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 16, 1960

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. HERRIDGE—ALLEGED IMPROPER USE OF HOUSE OF COMMONS STATIONERY

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege on information supplied to me by a highly indignant editor of a daily newspaper that supports the present government. It is a question that should concern all members of this house, namely the improper use of House of Commons stationery.

There is in Ottawa a cartoonist named Mr. Gordon Johnston, who makes his headquarters at 162 Belmont Avenue. Mr. Johnston is the creator of a dubious new comic strip entitled "Jeff Buchanon, parliamentary press gallery reporter". Last week Mr. Johnston and his associates distributed to the newspapers across Canada the details of their comic strip service. The fabulous Buchanon, they say—

—is going to work on comic pages across Canada on May 16. If you want him on staff, exclusive in your area, send me a wire, collect.

Mr. Johnston and his group are apparently a well financed free enterprise organization. It can afford to print and send out to prospective newspaper customers masses of letters and advertising material, and apparently to pay its postage bills and accept collect telegrams. But evidently it cannot afford to pay for its own envelopes.

This advertising propaganda arrived on the desks of newspaper editors across Canada in official House of Commons envelopes bearing the crown and the Canadian royal coat of arms. My point of privilege is that this is a highly improper use of House of Commons stationery.

I wish to bring to the attention of the house the fact that this advertisement, which reads:

The parliament of Canada in the spotlight with Jeff Buchanon of the parliamentary press gallery—

I have never heard of him—

—a man around "the House".

—contains an etching of the House of Commons and the figure of the mythical Jeff Buchanon, who somewhat resembles a picture of Mr. Arthur Blakely, taken some ten years ago.

Mr. Speaker, while I cannot raise a question of privilege concerning individual members of the press gallery, I must remind the house that on one occasion Sir Winston Churchill said that the press gallery as an institution is an emanation of a free parliament whose members have somewhat more intimate relations with the members of the House of Commons than other groups. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention of the house the fact that this advertising does convey the false impression that the material in question, the reporting and the cartoons to follow, emanate from the parliamentary press gallery.

While I cannot raise this as a direct question of privilege, with our knowledge of the rectitude and propriety of the gentlemen concerned and the extent to which they cherish their privileges and relationships in this house, I know this aspect of the question will concern all members of the house and should therefore receive their consideration.

This being an improper use of House of Commons stationery and, as a consequence, a violation of our statutes, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch):

That the subject matter of my question of privilege be referred to the standing committee on privileges and elections for its investigation and later report to the house.

Mr. Speaker: It falls to my lot to determine, in the first instance, whether a prime facie question of privilege has been raised. Before accepting this motion, if any hon. member wishes to indicate his view, or the views of the House of Commons, with respect to the proposed motion I should be glad to hear him now or reserve the question and hear him tomorrow.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) has made the matter clear, but if I may I would like to emphasize this point. I believe the hon. member for Kootenay West has filed with you what has been sent out apparently from the press gallery of this House of Commons. But, sir, in particular this matter concerns cartooning and reporting allegedly emanating from the press gallery of the House of Commons, which has been sent out in official envelopes of the House of Commons to newspapers across Canada.