

Point of Order—Mr. Hnatyshyn

draw their question of privilege. However, that refers to the practice where:

If he is not so satisfied when the circumstances are first brought to his attention privately, he may inform the member that he is not entitled to raise the matter as a question of privilege—

Which we in this House never do.

In the United Kingdom the practice is quite different and goes to the point where the Speaker rules on the question of privilege on the basis of the written statement and does not hear members in the House. Or he may allow a member to make a statement with a view to ascertaining whether or not a prima facie case can be made out. That is where the discretion of the Speaker can be exercised.

As to the comment made by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I do not think I said I was applying this discretion strictly but that I was progressively applying it more strictly. That did not mean that I would cut off debate inevitably after one speaker; rather, I will cut it off when I feel I am sufficiently informed, and that is the latitude that the Speaker has. The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition fears that I am going into precedents and that this practice might be applied to other circumstances. Well, no. The discretion of the House has been used in different ways, listening to several speakers or just one. So the precedents are on both sides and I am not departing from any custom of this House in doing what I have been doing today and on previous days.

I am not inventing a new rule, it is already there; the practice is established and I am applying it in my discretion. Of course, I do not deny that and I think hon. members would recognize that I have that discretion. I want to assure them that I apply that discretion only when I feel, from the written statement to begin with and then from the statement made in the House, that I am sufficiently informed and ready to rule. I want to give hon. members the absolute assurance that I am as careful as possible not to deprive them of the ability to bring up or better explain a question of privilege if I have the least doubt about it.

● (1640)

Furthermore, I want to say that no one in the House is violating the rules. If any members were, it would be my duty to prevent them, to call them to order, to reprimand them or to impose the sanctions I can impose on hon. members when they are violating the rules. At the present time, none of them is violating the rules; that is the statement with which I must associate myself.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, I was elected by the people of my constituency to help keep Canada together. I object to the name-calling of the hon. minister when he discribed myself and other members on this side of the House as a demolition gang.

We are not a demolition gang. We are helping to build Canada. If Canada is being destroyed, it is members on the government side who are doing it; their policies are doing it.

Certainly the minister will not help things in Canada by calling names, particularly untrue ones. I am not part of a demolition gang; I am part of a building gang trying to save Canada from the Liberals.

An hon. Member: Name-calling.

Mr. Andre: What a terrible thing to say.

Madam Speaker: If I may speak to this point of order, the expression is not unparliamentary. The hon. minister expressed his opinion in his way, and the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) expressed his opinion. I must leave it at that. The particular expression was not unparliamentary.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to intervene very briefly on the point of order of the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor).

An hon. Member: He did not have a point of order.

Mr. Nielsen: Then I will raise my own. If the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) gets snarly, as he is, then I will raise my own point of order.

When we were in office from October 9, 1979, until December 14, 1979, the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) was basking in the chairman's chair of Air Canada. During that time, without counting the allotted days, there were 49 sitting days. During that time, 231 of those government members who are trying to tar this party with the brush of obstructionism raised a combined total of 130 questions of privilege and points of order.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nielsen: When they speak of demolition gangs, let them examine their own record. Before they start throwing stones, let them examine their own record.

We were prevented, during those few short sitting days, from doing anything in Parliament. It was a deliberate effort made by hon. members opposite, when they were sitting in opposition, to prevent us from doing everything we wanted to do. We were not talking about the Constitution, something so basically and fundamentally important to our land; we were talking about economic measures to assist Canadians. But let them not cast the first stone, in view of their own dank, dark, bleak record.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PRIVILEGE

MR. CORBETT—DESIGNATION OF MR. LEBLANC AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy-Royal): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege arises out of the question period yesterday when I put a question to the minister the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has designated as the minister responsible for New