

[English]

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, to those of us who have been in the House during the time this question of privilege has been debated it seems the hon. minister has already spoken to the question.

Miss Bégin: No, I have been interrupted each time.

Mr. Epp: You are not the Speaker. Madam Speaker, you have ruled that she has been heard. Are you now giving her a second opportunity, an opportunity that apparently does not exist for other members? Will that opportunity not be provided to others?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I had intervened in the remarks being made by the hon. minister and I thought I should let her pursue them now that we have heard from the Secretary of State and Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox). In the interest of elucidating this question I would appeal to the minister to speak very briefly in whatever refutation she wishes to make in relation to a point that needs to be clarified, but to be very careful not to refer to the ruling of yesterday.

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, I thank you for your advice. I will keep my remarks very short. The hon. member for Peterborough just questioned the possibility for every member of Parliament, of whatever political affiliation, to discharge dutifully his or her responsibility as a member of Parliament. He suggested that the practices of two departments, including mine, were going against that capacity every member must have. In that regard, I want to assure him as well as all members of the House that according to the practices in my own political office every member is considered equal and that no interference can be made in respect of a project slated for his riding. I think that—so I would like to—

[English]

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: I recognize the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) on a point of order.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order which has been raised before by members on this side. A question of privilege has been raised by the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) dealing with the Department of the Secretary of State and Minister of Communications. The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) in trying for the third or fourth time to bend the rules of the House, and thereby smuggle in a defence of her actions on a question decided yesterday, applies to her a special privilege that does not apply to members on this side of the House of Commons. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that is absolutely out of order.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Privilege—Mr. Domm

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition will recognize that there was argumentation by analogy and I had to listen carefully to the conclusions of that argument. I feel the Chair is now sufficiently informed.

Let me say in respect of the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Peterborough that I should like to reserve my decision because of the single argument put forward by the hon. member in which he quoted a precedent of December 6, 1968 of one of my predecessors. I would want to look at the question raised in full light of that precedent. The hon. member did quote part of the decision of my predecessor, but I want to look at it more fully in order to rule on this question of privilege. I must determine how deliberate were the actions to which the hon. member referred. Certainly the documents were not official documents, that is to say, documents which were tabled in the House, and that certainly makes a difference in the argumentation which can be brought forward to prove a question of privilege.

Quite obviously, in the view of the hon. member for Peterborough the information he received was incomplete, to say the least, but no member has given me evidence that members of other parties in this House did not receive the same kind of list or documents. I have not been informed whether all hon. members received the incomplete list, or whether only the hon. member for Peterborough received that list, in which case there is no different treatment given to different members of the House. In any event, I should like to examine that situation.

I want also to look at the question whether it is part of the essential duties of members of Parliament to congratulate new Canadians upon receiving Canadian citizenship. I am sure that is a very useful thing and I am sure that new citizens of this country appreciate congratulations from their members of Parliament. However, one has to determine whether that is really an essential duty of a member of Parliament. One must decide if pursuant to the fact that he did not receive the lists on time or that they were incomplete whether the hon. member was in effect prevented from performing his function as a member of this House.

I need not remind hon. members that the duties of members of Parliament are to attend the House of Commons, express themselves freely and to vote. If an hon. member is menaced or prevented from attending the House of Commons by anyone that, of course, would be a breach of privilege. I am sure these three essential duties must be expanded to include other ancillary duties. I must look at the many precedents to see what can be interpreted as an essential duty of a member of the House of Commons, and in that way decide whether the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Peterborough has established that he or other members have been prevented from fulfilling their duties.

On that basis I reserve the matter as I feel there may be some evidence of a question of privilege.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether you have now ruled out the