

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

Madam Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the hon. member, but if he is exposing a question of privilege I would like him to indicate to me if he feels that any particular rule, or practice, for that matter, in the absence of a rule, has been breached. I would like him to tell me where his point of privilege lies. Of course the hon. member knows that democratic debate is part of what Parliament is all about. He would have to tell me that there have been some irregularities in the way these proceedings have been going on. If the hon. member would do that it would be helpful to me.

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, I promise to take no more than two minutes. I have listened to what has gone on in the House for three days. This is the last speech of this kind I hope will have to be made by anyone, because I hope the Conservatives—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: Unctuous hypocrite!

Mr. Broadbent: I want to conclude by saying most seriously to the Conservative Party, which in many respects has both in Canada and Great Britain a responsible and honourable Conservative tradition when it comes to the governing process, read Edmund Burke and a contemporary Conservative, Michael Oakshott. If they read people like that they will understand that the rights and privileges of Members of Parliament are inextricably bound up with the principle about which you hear minorities speak. Listen to them. At some point in a democracy the majority must have the right to decide.

Some hon. Members: What about the provinces?

Mr. Broadbent: If that majority will is frustrated, if that majority of men and women elected from all parts of Canada is not able to decide because a minority wants to disrupt Parliament then—

Some hon. Members: Then call an election.

Mr. Broadbent:—the respect for which all members should be held in a free society is diminished. That causes serious harm to the democratic assembly when it is held in mockery by the people of this land. I am one who believes that the majority must have the right to decide at some point, which is the essence of my question of privilege. At this point the will of the majority is being frustrated by the irresponsibility of the minority.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Madam Speaker, I can bear name-calling from the Leader of the New Democratic Party—

Mr. Broadbent: How about “windbag”?

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):—although most of the time I have always spoken very kindly of him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is not the reason I rise. The reason I rise is with respect to the question of privilege he raised and what he said in the course of it about it being our intention to not allow the question on the constitutional matter which is before the House to come to a vote. That is resolution No. 41, or whatever it is. I recognize, and every member of this House recognizes, that whether we are talking about amendments or about the main motion, it will come to a vote. I think what has to be recognized is that there is a very strong difference of opinion on the resolution itself. There have been discussions amongst us, from time to time about how that might be expedited.

● (1520)

I have said categorically to my friend, the government House leader, on every occasion, that I took seriously—and maybe this is where I was wrong—two undertakings that were given by the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). One of those undertakings was given the night he made the announcement in respect of the proposals before the government. What he said was that every Member of Parliament who wanted to speak would have the right to speak on that resolution.

Mr. Crosbie: We are not going to hold our noses here to put it through.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Then, prior to the Christmas adjournment the government House leader, on the instructions of cabinet, because I do not think he would do it on his own initiative—I think better of him than that—used the provisions of Standing Order 33 in the House to close off debate when Members of Parliament were exercising their right. As everyone knows, there was a great upset in the House of Commons, and I do not condone that kind of upset in this place.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: More hypocrisy!

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): But it occurred, and that was the use of closure at the first stage. Then when we raised that, we were told by the Prime Minister again, “Don’t worry, fellows. You still have the third stage.”

In answer to a question from the hon. member from Athabasca (Mr. Shields) a line is recorded in *Hansard* in which he said he wanted to hear from every member. So, we had closure the first time with the promise that we would have the right to hear, at the third stage, every member who wanted to speak.

The fact is that as the debate has gone on—and you yourself can check—the speeches have not been 40 minutes; they have been much shorter than that, with one exception. That happened to be the speech of the Prime Minister. He is the Prime Minister and I am not going to quarrel with his right to do that. That is what we were promised, twice.

What we are faced with today as a result of the question I put to the government House leader last night is this: “I want