

*Privilege—Mr. Broadbent*

Madam Speaker. We are not asking you to rule that there has been wrong doing or abuse, or what have you, but, I am asking you to consider the proposition that there is enough question about what the government is doing to the rights and privileges of Parliament for the issue to be referred to the appropriate committee, and that is why the leader of this party has raised this question of privilege today.

**Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, I will be very brief in what I have to say. There may be, at some stage or other, some confusion in the use of the word government. Some people use the word government meaning the bureaucracy—the public service at the federal level—and some mean that it is all members of Parliament or the parliamentary institution itself. In this discussion today, obviously the word government in the most restrictive sense means the political party which happens to have the executive among its benches who direct the spending of the money and see the results.

● (1240)

I feel quite strongly, and I want to emphasize, as other members have emphasized, that members of Parliament, and that is what they are, who happen to be cabinet ministers, an accident of choice by the Prime Minister or perhaps of wisdom, are receiving through the use of public funds, information which other members of Parliament are not getting. They are, therefore, at an advantage over us. That is not equal or fair.

I can understand that there may be sensitive polls which they may want to withhold for a period of time, possibly for reasons of national security. It might be in the middle of negotiating federal-provincial relations. If there are such polls—

**Mr. Nielsen:** They should pay for them.

**Mr. Dick:** Some suggestion has been made that they might pay for them. It may be in the national interest. I will let other speakers speak for themselves. At the very least, they might undertake to communicate those results to the leaders of other parties in the House. Those 12 polls which they may not want to publicize right now would be known to everyone on all sides of the House and we would be on equal footing. That might be a way around those 12 polls if they are going to be withheld. It may not be the best way, but it may be satisfactory. I look forward to the tabling of the other 141 polls.

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta):** Madam Speaker, I will be very brief. What concerns me is the precedent which the government is establishing with regard to the use of polls. For example, if it takes a poll regarding a particular issue and it finds a certain response in the public that it is concerned about, it can then, as was discussed yesterday, engage in an advertising campaign that can be addressed to meet that condition it has found in its polling. Let me illustrate.

In the speaker's guide which has just been given to us it says:

With a charter of rights and freedoms entrenched in the constitution, it would be beyond the power of Parliament or any provincial legislature acting alone to tamper with it.

That is a subject of debate in this House. The government can take a poll to see what the reaction is in the country. If it finds a result it does not particularly agree with or like, it can engage in an advertising campaign—witness the speaker's manual—to see whether it can manipulate public opinion, which in effect makes the work of this House ineffectual. It is doing an end run around the work in this House. That is why the use of polls becomes so devious, destructive, and really affects the members of the House and the work they do here.

Because of this very controversial statement, about which all of us disagree, the debate is going on. We fundamentally are in disagreement with the whole monitoring process in the constitution. Because we are in disagreement, we are debating it. Yet the government can use those polls and use an advertising campaign in conjunction with those polls to change the attitude of the public rather than allow Parliament full and free debate and let the public understand what is going on in this House.

**Madam Speaker:** If there had been a speaker on the government side of the House, I would have heard him. I feel that the last speakers more or less brought forth the same argument. I will now cut off the debate and take this question of privilege under advisement. It is very close to the one that was discussed yesterday. In examining this, I might look at them together. I will look at them, especially the second one, in light of the precedents, because the arguments brought forward do not relate very closely to the question of privilege. However, I will take it under advisement.

MR. NIELSEN—STATEMENT MADE BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I am glad to see the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) in her seat. The question of privilege I have to raise arises as a result of an exchange between the minister and myself yesterday where the minister, at page 3528 of *Hansard*, used these words. Referring to myself, she said:

He is misleading the House right now.

It has long been our practice to avoid the use of such terms in the House, or to qualify them. Certainly it is open to the minister to make a qualification such as "inadvertently misleading" or "unintentionally misleading," which is often done in debate.

May I refer the Chair to page 108 of Beauchesne's fifth edition, the bottom of the page, where the term "mislead" is set out under subsection (2) of 319 of Beauchesne. It states:

Since 1958, it has been ruled unparliamentary to use the following expressions: