

would have no difficulty in deciding on the facts, the intricate arguments of the law would be more than I would be expected to decide. Therefore, I say, in a serious way, that if this is where these discussions are leading us, no matter how great the grievance may be, it may leave me in a situation in which procedurally I would have no authority to act, because if we have a disagreement of law and facts, surely that is not a procedural matter on which the Chair should decide.

However, I say that today only in a preliminary way, and I will stand the matter over until I have heard further from the hon. member for Halifax as to whether he wishes to proceed, and if at that time there are other hon. members who have contributions to make, after reviewing what I have had to say this afternoon, I will hear them then.

MR. RODRIGUEZ—ANSWER GIVEN BY POSTMASTER GENERAL

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) gave notice earlier of a grievance with respect to remarks made by the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne). I think it was understood that when both members were back in the House, they would address themselves to it. Do I have an indication now that either hon. member wishes to develop that point further?

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I raised my question of privilege last week and went through the details at that time. Furthermore, I sent to Your Honour's office today a further addendum dealing with that question of privilege. I believe you are to make a ruling today, sir.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Both hon. members made a contribution to this point the other day. After examining the record, I found some difficulty because the words which the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) used in reply to a question put by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) were the following:

Mr. Speaker, when I listen to a question like that, I wonder if the attitude of the hon. member is not one of protecting the workers who got involved in illegal activities or actions disrupting the postal service.

The situation is this: I think there are two things which would tend to cause me to set the point aside, expect that an abundance of caution would tell me that I might ask the Postmaster General to make his position clear. I think that might be the safer course to follow.

It seems to me that I should ask for the withdrawal of the language only when the language used clearly imputes motives which are unsavoury, or else where the language is unparliamentary. In the circumstances, in looking at the language I find that certainly unparliamentary language was not used, but it may be, as the Postmaster General attempted to say on that day, that his answer contained a more generous interpretation than appeared at first. If that is the case, that the Postmaster General was simply concerning himself with whether or not the hon. member was protecting union members who were being charged with offences, that seems to me to be a legitimate objective of the hon. member. It is not

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protecting union members who have difficulty in the courts, and it is certainly not an unsavoury implication.

However, it appeared in the answer that, because of the last couple of words "or actions disrupting the postal service" the impression might have been conveyed that the Postmaster General was attempting to say that the hon. member was concerning himself with protecting those who were disrupting the postal service, instead of putting a question. If that is so, I would ask the Postmaster General, out of an abundance of caution, to clarify to the House that he did not intend to impute that kind of motive to the hon. member. If that could be done, the matter could be gracefully retired.

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I can say clearly that I did not intend to impute motives to the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). However, I would like to stress the fact that in reading the question of the hon. member I find I could probably have raised a number of questions of privilege because the question is full of insinuations that we are threatening the employees and that harassment is our policy. I do not think that is the way to ask a question in the House, with that presumption.

I am not imputing motives to the hon. member nor, I am sure, is he imputing motives to me or to the Post Office Department. The fact is that when we have good, law-abiding workers, they do not have to worry, and if they have nothing reprehensible in their record we would be glad to withdraw the letter of intent. In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I think perhaps the words went beyond my meaning.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

AMENDMENT RESPECTING POLLING DAY

Mr. Bob Kaplan (York Centre) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-442, to amend the Canada Elections Act (choice of polling day).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the need for this bill arose during the recent by-elections when the government called the by-elections on a religious holiday. There appears to be a lack of flexibility in the legislation at present which requires that an election be held on a Monday or, in certain cases, on a Tuesday.

● (1552)

One of the thrusts of this bill is to permit an election to be called on a Wednesday, Thursday, or subsequent day, if a religious holiday intervenes. A second thrust of the bill is to provide that the advance polls be open until ten o'clock at night, because Saturday advance polls always conflict with the Jewish religious holiday. It would extend the voting hours until ten o'clock to overcome that problem.