

Privilege—Mr. McGrath

Champlain constituency of whom I am trying to be the worthy and proud representative.

Mr. Speaker, under what basic principles would you not recognize the spokesman for the riding of Champlain since he has been sitting as an independent? Under what rule is priority given to the eight members sitting immediately before me and to another one dragging a leg on my left? You will tell me that there has been tolerance. I will not accept that inadmissible tolerance when it goes against the interests of my constituents. I admit that it is difficult for Your Honour always to make a wise and fair choice of speakers in the debates on speeches from the throne and budgets. The same goes for motions under Standing Order 43 or the question period. However, I cannot tolerate without expressing my indignation being systematically eliminated from a reasonable participation in the heat of the action in this House.

● (1532)

As I already wrote you in previous correspondence, that is all the more revolting as the taxpayers of Champlain in particular, and the taxpayers of Quebec as a whole generally, were used to hearing me regularly defend their interests, denounce injustices and try to promote the profound aspirations of a large number of Quebecers. Why silence that voice? Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not have the monopoly of expression from Quebec in this parliament but I think that all my colleagues will admit that I am the only one who openly wants a constitutional change through a restructuring of Canada that is closely related to the sovereignty-association option being advocated by the government of Quebec. Do you not think that is it good that at least from time to time all members of this House and consequently the whole people of this country should know that at least one member was not caught off guard by the election in Quebec on November 15, 1976? Is that not an excellent means of trying to harmonize different opinions and thus create a climate of sound objectivity with respect to the future of this country?

You may answer me from your chair with arguments like tradition or even regular attendance. I will answer beforehand that tradition should not supersede justice and that I am not interested in having the people of my riding see their member of parliament silent in the action. I will not warm up a seat in this place—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I recognized the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte) to raise a question of privilege, and he understands very well that there is no question of privilege. The suggestion that he is systematically avoided in the selection of those who may rise in this House is completely false. The hon. member must realize, I am sure, that although he sits as an independent member, during proceedings for example he wanted to take part in the throne speech debate, a debate which is limited by our Standing Orders. Now the difficulty for the Speaker or Deputy Speaker, whatever the

[Mr. Matte.]

circumstances, is to recognize members according to the time allotted to different parties in this House, including independent members.

If I remember correctly, at least one of the independent members took part in the throne speech debate and another one took part recently in the budget debate. If it was not the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte), this was certainly not the fault of the Chair. If the hon. member wants to suggest that the fact that the Chair recognized another independent member to take part in the budget debate violated his rights, I would like to point out that this is quite untrue. Second, it is against our rules and our traditions to suggest that the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker or one of the Acting Speakers have deliberately made their choice in violation of the rights of the hon. member or some other member. Of course, there can be certain limitations, even as concerns government members during question period, since each day I can recognize only one government member among seven, eight or ten who regularly seek to be recognized to ask a question. It is the same for opposition members. Since we must distribute the time of debate among members of the various political parties, the same problem exists for independent members. The Chair always tries to be fair when allocating the time available to the members of the House and it recognized one independent member during the budget debate and another one during the throne speech debate. If we went to the trouble of making an exact calculation, we would see that the Chair has been more than fair towards independent members. This is what has always been done in the past. On occasion, I try to recognize one or another of the independent members during question period. In view of the number of members from other parties in the House, I have the impression that the independent member is not only treated fairly, but most generously. I must now put an end to the contribution of the hon. member for Champlain because I am sure that he now realizes that this is not a question of privilege any more than a point of order. If he wants to discuss something privately with the Speaker, this can always be arranged. However, he does not have a question of privilege.

● (1542)

[English]

MR. GOODALE—INACCURATE REPORTING BY MEDIA OF MR. SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege at this particular hour with some hesitancy, as I think the House might understand given the events of the last two or three days. I rise both as a member of parliament who does not want to see the work of this House unduly delayed or interfered with on procedural matters, and also as a former journalist and news reporter who has a very high regard for those who are charged with what is a serious responsibility of reporting the news to the people of Canada.

The question of privilege which I put before you for consideration this afternoon arises from events in the House of the