

Privilege—Mr. Nielsen

his own House order we are living with, that if we come to Orders of the Day before four o'clock, we would rise and re-convene. I am not wasting any time in a technical way and I am certainly not raising any passing matter of frivolity. We have the makings of a threat against all Opposition Members of Parliament that cannot be glossed over lightly.

I know, Sir, that you will look upon this seriously enough to take the matter under advisement and consider very carefully what the decision will be. I submit to you in all sincerity that the matter is a valid question. There is a serious question of privilege that should be referred to the House for a decision.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, lacking the prophetic talents of the Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), I do not have before me a pile of some thirty-odd pages prepared in advance, all nicely ordered so that I can make a speech on a matter that, according to the Member for Yukon, arose from an article published this morning. I was looking at the elaborate document he prepared. I wonder whether he drafted it this morning or whether it has been in his files for some time. In any case, I merely intend to look at the facts that could possibly form the basis for a question of privilege.

Judging from the facts before the House, which are the only facts that should be considered by the Chair in deciding whether there is a question of privilege, there is not much there. We have here a mass of high-sounding principles, sometimes a bit exaggerated and a bit drawn-out, that have been enumerated or mentioned by the Member for Yukon, but as a general rule, he was quoting principles, in some cases with, and other cases without, their context but in any case, principles that should be considered and applied only when the facts so justify.

What is lacking in his arguments is that there are no facts or elements that could lead us to believe that there had been an investigation into the private life of one or several Members. There is nothing before the House that justifies the conclusion or even the suspicion that the private life of a Member had been the subject of a "secret investigation", to use the Opposition's words.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose you heard the brief, concise and brilliant answers given by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) during Oral Question Period. One by one, he disarmed the Members on the front bench of the Progressive Conservative Party, who visibly wanted to build up a momentum that would justify their indulging in a form of obstruction, as a footnote to a happy anniversary. Unfortunately for the Members opposite, however, because the Deputy Prime Minister had the facts and the truth on his side, he was able, simply and literally to disarm them, and as a result, the cut-and-dried document prepared in advance by the Member for Yukon became totally insignificant. It has absolutely no basis in fact.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are quite simple. During the Progressive Conservative Party's leadership campaign, one of the candidates, now the Member for Central Nova (Mr. Mulrony), said that he wanted to lead the country more or less as though it were a large corporation, because he had experience in managing a multinational, the Iron Ore Company, and had shown that he was very good at it. Upon starting his career in public life, the Hon. Member used that experience in becoming a candidate and running for the leadership. Subsequently, he used the same arguments during his election campaign in Central Nova, and later, here in the House, he also referred to his experience in managing the Iron Ore Company, especially in Schefferville.

● (1540)

That is the basic issue of the debate today. Following those allegations made public and used publicly by the Leader of the Opposition to win his election, we now have one of two individuals who is accused of being a secret spy by the Opposition. I am referring to Mr. Crenna of the political office of the Prime Minister, which is not the same thing as the Privy Council. The Leader of the Opposition also has an office and public funds in excess of \$1 million to hire people whose sole occupation is nothing other than political activities. Even the Leader of the New Democratic Party has a budget of \$570,000 to hire similar staff, as the Deputy Prime Minister has indicated. The Prime Minister is entitled to a slightly larger budget for his political office. Mr. Crenna is from the political office of the Prime Minister and, after the Member for Central Nova talked about his experience in the management of major companies, we want to know exactly what happened at the Iron Ore and at Schefferville. What is so remarkable about the management of a company which has to close its doors and practically ruin the economy of the north shore? What is so remarkable? That is why we want to set the record straight, since the Leader of the Opposition himself raised the issue.

As it happened, Mr. Crenna—the so-called secret spy—was performing his duty in Washington to seek information about various other sectors. As the Hon. Member and the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out, he went to a public commission, the American Securities and Exchange Commission. It is open to the public for those who seek public documents concerning a public report on a public company. Those are the facts concerning the secret spy, Mr. Crenna. He went to ask a public document about a public company in a public place, nothing else. There is no other evidence which would lead us to believe that he has inquired into the private life of anyone. These are the facts as far as the first person involved is concerned, and I do not think that I am exaggerating. In all the answers which were given to the questions asked and in all the facts that you have before you, I ask you to indicate what element could lead us to believe that the private life of an individual has been subjected to an investigation.