

Privilege—Miss Bégin

that I am on this side of the barrier I will continue to do so in the name of the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad—

Some hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I intend to stand here all day or until the rabble over there stays quiet in order to answer what is a spurious question of privilege.

First, I did not accuse the minister of personally pursuing Sant Singh, a public servant who is in fact being persecuted by the attitude of the government of Canada. What I did say about the minister is that in what is happening to Dr. Sant Singh she is not pursuing him; in fact, she is neglecting him because of the persecution he has undergone. That is the first thing I want to make clear. The minister cannot pass this off either to the courts or to her deputy minister in this offhand way. She is the minister responsible here for the operation of her department, and she is responsible to the people of Canada and to her public servants. That was the reason we went through the whole matter of decentralizing authority within the public service of Canada. That is point number one.

The second thing is that I do not like that minister talking about my advocating interference with the judiciary. I do not like a minister of this government suddenly taking such a pious interest in the judiciary when the government stands against the judiciary in terms of refusing to allow it to review requests for information, which are to be denied under the government's freedom of information proposal. The government has no reason at all suddenly to become a defender. These are the facts, and I have to reply.

On the merits of this case, it was found by Mr. O'Shea, the public service adjudicator, that this public servant was not allowed to see his file, which is contrary to the law.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): The second thing that that adjudicator found, and I am referring to page 33 of the judgment, was that the circumstances of this case are not only suspicious but they also lead to the conclusion that matters other than the grievor's departmental performance were improperly considered. That is the other aspect of it.

Before Your Honour rules on this question of privilege I commend to you a reading of this judgment by Mr. O'Shea. The essence of this judgment is that this public servant was interfered with within the department, aided and abetted by a deputy minister, for his political involvement, this by a government which professes and takes credit of passing a statute which is supposed to permit public servants to engage in political activity. If anyone has a question of privilege in this House it is not the minister, it is I and the public service of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Miss Bégin.]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister has been extended what is a custom of the House. During the course of the question period remarks are occasionally made or matters are raised in such a manner as to give rise to possible questions of privilege. Therefore, it is the duty of the Chair to hear the participants in those discussions. The minister has been given the opportunity to point out to the Chair the remarks which were made by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and which she found offensive. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton has been given an opportunity to reply.

I did not permit an answer to the question because the question was argumentative. It was an argument and not a question. However, that is a procedural matter. It does not accord with my recollection that the remarks which were made did raise a question of privilege, and neither has anything raised in this discussion to this point raised a question of privilege. Therefore the matter should stop there.

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Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On October 17 last in *Hansard* at page 8213 there appeared an answer to a question put by the hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert). The hon. member asked, and I quote:

In the past five years, how many public servants have been dismissed for waste, extravagance or misuse of public funds?

Unfortunately, the composite answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard) does not reflect the answer I provided to him. I wish to read the reply submitted by my department as follows:

In the past five years, 489 Post Office employees have been discharged for various types of misconduct. Records do not allow for a breakdown by "waste, extravagance or misuse of public funds".

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Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. It pertains to the decision of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) to allocate, with magnificent generosity, about half an hour later today to members of the opposition parties to have access to the details of proposals he will be making in the House tonight. The news media are to be permitted access at least half an hour earlier. The question of privilege I raise is a very important one as it affects all hon. members of this House, particularly in view of the presence of television in the House of Commons.

What we have is the following situation: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has decided to televise the minister's speech. No one objects to that. The reason for that is that members of all parties have supported the access of television to the House of Commons to provide the people of Canada an opportunity to see what goes on here. There is a very serious concern, however, if we have a complex matter—really it is a substitute budget we are getting tonight, if we are to believe the publicity of the government—which affects the operation of the House of Commons. When we have had complex measures before, such as a budget, then the responsibility of the government has been adhered to by permitting opposition spokesmen access, not a half hour but two to three hours in advance, to such measures upon which they are supposed to