

Privilege

In conclusion, and in the same spirit, I owe my hon. friend from Granby a comment simply because I was precluded from answering. It is very simple and straightforward: The participation of the Prime Minister of Canada in the 1980 referendum presupposed by all of those who participated in it the democratic acceptance of what was a democratic consultation among the people of the province of Quebec. That has always been my position. It has been the position of the Leader of the Opposition and others, and I believe it to be a legitimate one.

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PRIVILEGE**WITHDRAWAL OF COMMENTS RESPECTING STANDING COMMITTEE**

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made allegations to the effect that the PMO had contacted the reporting services to prevent the printing of minutes. That is not so. In fact, the PMO's contact with reporting services was to obtain the minutes of the meeting.

Earlier I informed the chairman of the consumer and corporate affairs committee of such, and I now withdraw those allegations unequivocally.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point. I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with my colleague before Question Period today, and he was kind enough to inform me of his intention to rise in the House today to make the statement that he just made.

I thank my colleague on behalf of the members of the committee for having closed this matter in the way he did.

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, of which I have given Your Honour notice, concerning the supplementary question which I was attempting to ask of the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Question Period.

As I pointed out to Your Honour, the question related to the actions of the Consul General in Boston, for whom the Secretary of State for External Affairs is directly responsible. Indeed, he was responsible for the appointment of this individual.

In my supplementary question, I was simply seeking to obtain an assurance from the Secretary of State for

External Affairs that not a private letter but a public attack on an individual within the Catholic Church of Prince Edward Island for expressing views on government policy was not an acceptable manner for a diplomat to proceed.

I was simply seeking an assurance from the minister, who is responsible for the Consul General's activities, that this kind of thing will not be repeated and that there would be an apology. With respect, I would hope the Secretary of State for External Affairs might be prepared to answer the question which is indeed in order.

Mr. Speaker: I think the first thing I should say is that of course the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway gave me notice of this and raised it as a question of privilege. It is not. It is a point of order. It may well be that if I had heard the end of the question, the supplemental, I might have been in agreement with the hon. member.

However, given what was said at that point I felt it was straying beyond the bounds, and that was my ruling at that time. I understand the point the hon. member is making.

The right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs may wish to respond. He indicates that he does not wish to respond.

ARREST OF GLEN KEALEY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on another question of privilege. At approximately five minutes to two today outside this Chamber a gentleman, Mr. Glen Kealey, was standing peacefully and silently, holding a Canadian flag and a sign.

At that time, Mr. Kealey was approached by a member of the RCMP and was arrested. A number of members of Parliament questioned the basis for that arrest, and we were told by the officer in question that Mr. Kealey was obstructing the law.

I want to raise a question of privilege regarding contempt of this House in view of the unanimous and strong position that was taken by the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations in a letter addressed to the Minister of Public Works in July 1990 when the regulations allowing for this kind of arrest were severely criticized and were arguably in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was suggested and it was urged unanimously by the committee that the regulations should be revoked at once and that there should be pre-publication for any subsequent regulations.