

Privilege—Mr. Siddon

The government has taken a position on the Roberts Bank expansion, as was indicated earlier today by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Roberts), which is at complete variance with the recommendations with the Environmental Assessment and Review Process panel. That makes my life very difficult in being able to explain to my constituents why it is that the government has opted for a much larger plan—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Siddon: If we might have a little more respect from those members to my left who are usually concerned about environmental matters—

Madam Speaker: The hon. member might be inconvenienced by whatever the government or the minister has done, but he has to tell me that he has been inconvenienced to the point that he has been harassed, molested or that someone has attempted to stop him from performing in this House. That is privilege. If a minister did not give the proper information or if in some other way he feels that he has a grievance toward a certain minister, he can voice that grievance. I encourage him to do it but not under the guise of a question of privilege.

Mr. Siddon: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what I am trying to establish. It is a fact that I have not been provided by the government opposite with the factual scientific information to present to my constituents in order to justify a plan of action which is at complete variance with the findings of a properly constituted environmental assessment panel established by this government and whose recommendations were endorsed by the previous minister of the environment of the previous government.

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Siddon: Madam Speaker, the recommendations I seek would be in the form of a report which is available to the public, to members of my constituency and to myself as the Member of Parliament, in order to argue on the government's behalf that the conditions under which this project—to which a contract is to be let by April 4, according to the Minister of Transport—is to proceed are at complete variance with the environmental recommendations brought forward in good faith to the public in my riding and of British Columbia.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. member is repeating what I said did not constitute an argument. If something is at variance with the recommendation of an environmental committee, that does not constitute a question of privilege. I cannot repeat it any more clearly to the hon. member. He has to bring some other argument to prove to me that he has a question of privilege.

Mr. Siddon: Madam Speaker, we have a process of environmental review in this country which enables Members of Parliament to gather information, to take that information and

help to advocate or oppose the recommendations of the government. What has happened in the present case—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. A point of order, the hon. member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson).

● (2040)

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order pursuant to Citations 18, 19 and 84 of Beaudesne. In part, Citation 17 reads:

A question of privilege ought really to come up in Parliament.

A question of privilege is a serious matter. It is not a question of grievance. We are here to represent our constituents and not to waste taxpayers' money.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): I draw to your attention paragraphs 1 through 4 of Citation 19. A dispute arising between two members does not constitute a question of privilege. In Section 19 (4), we read:

Many matters, such as the absence of a minister of the Crown from a committee studying his estimates, may constitute a grievance but not a question of privilege.

What is being attempted to be foisted on this House as a question of privilege may be a grievance. In the case of Roberts Bank, it may well be a legitimate grievance. I share the hon. member's concern. But to abuse this House with grievances under the guise of a question of privilege, which is a serious matter, not only is a waste of taxpayers' money but is a waste of the time of this Parliament.

With respect, Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to Citation 84 which concerns the role of the Speaker in a question of privilege. It states that it is essential that the matter be raised at the earliest possible opportunity.

I suggest that it is no mere coincidence that all of these alleged matters of privilege, which, in some cases constitute grievances and in other cases constitute a flagrant violation of privileges of other Members of Parliament in carrying out the responsibilities we have on behalf of our constituents, could have been raised some time ago and pursuant to Citation 84, they should have been raised some time ago.

Under the rules there is a requirement that you be given notice of the proposed question of privilege. I suggest, with respect, when you look at those notices, pursuant to the rules, that you should have in your mind whether or not this is a question being raised and which has been raised at the earliest possible opportunity. Citation 84 states that is your role as Speaker in considering questions of privilege.

I suggest, in the light of that and in the light of Citations 18 and 19, that we get on with the business of the House and deal with questions of privilege, which really are serious questions of privilege, and failing that, get on to the orders of the day.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning the one just raised. We have now listened to two interventions from the left, one raised by the