

Privilege—Mr. Oberle

which affects not only the privileges and position of this House but is fundamentally important to the value every citizen places in our country, its system of government, the basic rights of individuals and their civil liberties.

Mr. Speaker, I and other members of the opposition in the House have for some time attempted in the House as well as by other means to encourage the government to provide us with information with regard to a most serious matter respecting national security.

In 1971, the then solicitor general reacted to information which had been accumulated and passed on to him by either the security service of the RCMP or a security agency functioning under his own authority. The solicitor general wrote a letter to a number of his senior cabinet colleagues and undertook to discuss with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) the allegations which had been made to him. He attached to his letter a list of names of individuals, some of whom were employees of the public service at the time, all of whom were accused of subversive activities directed against the government.

● (1500)

Contrary to what the Solicitor General (Mr. Fox) said in the House, the letter identifies these people as the new left and states that they seek to organize and radicalize the under-classes in our society and to mould them into a revolutionary force capable of overthrowing our present socio-political system.

Mr. Paproski: Stick around, Lalonde.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am most anxious to allow the hon. member sufficient amplitude to develop at least the beginning of a question of privilege, but I am also anxious for the hon. member to restrict his disclosures to those facts which will support his case. I do not intend to interfere, but I invite the hon. member to come to the point and state the question of privilege.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, this is the second occasion in my years of service in the House on which I have raised a question of privilege. This matter is of the gravest importance to all of this country. I will make my argument as short as I can.

A radical EPO program is referred to in the letter, and this organization is predicated on a total and unequivocal rejection of representative democracy, its destruction and the creation of radical alternatives. If true, this must be considered a most serious affront to our system. The Solicitor General, of course, had every justification to act as he did. Indeed, he rightly considered it his responsibility to mobilize our own security forces against such challenges. There are, however, further actions the government should have undertaken. First, and most important, the government should have ordered a complete and comprehensive inquiry into the affair.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not challenging the hon. member's right to discuss matters of importance or to criticize the government in the past or now. However, I want the hon.

[Mr. Oberle.]

member to give some indication to the House of the basis upon which he is claiming that this is a matter of privilege and has priority over the other items of business to which the House would normally turn at this time.

Mr. Oberle: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I have laid the groundwork for a serious allegation and a serious question of privilege. If Your Honour and hon. members will bear with me for just a couple of minutes more I will get to the point. My question of privilege is this. Several of my colleagues have known, have tried to inform the government of this information, and have invited them to react. What constitutes the real question of privilege, of course, is the fact that despite the implications for the House of this matter, almost all the ministers connected with the list, as well as the Prime Minister, have denied knowledge of the affair. Having regard to the seriousness of the matter, which received the attention of the government at the time, I have good reason to assume that the Prime Minister and several ministers of the Crown have deliberately misled this House and the Canadian people.

An hon. Member: Prove it.

An hon. Member: Make a charge.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The hon. member has made the charge.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, if you find that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay):

That the matter of the extraparlimentary opposition which is referred to in a document circulated by the Solicitor General to members of the government and the Prime Minister be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I think that in rising on a question of privilege, the hon. member has instead abused the privileges of this House because he has taken advantage of this opportunity to read into the record of the House the documents he had in hand. As for us, we have taken all the necessary steps to prevent that kind of document, of a privileged nature and circulated between members of the cabinet, from being made public, precisely to protect the reputation of the people involved. The charges he makes do not contain any *prima facie* elements of a question of privilege. Anyway, what the opposition asked us point-blank to do yesterday was to comment on a document which was apparently written in 1971. We are expected to read that kind of document immediately, which is obviously impossible.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member's representations are much more in the nature of a debate. Their purpose seems to me to be much more that of raising passions, setting aside all restraint and giving all this matter a Machiavellian aura, while in fact it was simply a question of asking people to ensure that the security and confidentiality procedures within the government are enforced.