

Questions of Privilege

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you find this to be a prima facie case of privilege here, and that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. Do not let the hon. gentleman stand and refer to a factual brochure about the fishery and the fisheries dispute, and suggest that this is in any way similar to this mishappened document sent out in a clandestine manner using the franking privileges.

I would like a report on how often this has been done by the hon. gentleman this year. How many millions of pieces of mail have been sent out improperly in this manner by the Hon. Leader of the NDP?

I wish to table this document. This is the evidence that should be sent to the committee. I am prepared to testify, and hundreds more from St. John's East, who are sickened and disgusted by this heartless display of ignoring the rules of parliamentary democracy, will appear before the Committee too, if necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot of nonsense in the House in my years, but I think that all the limits of credibility have been exceeded by the absurd pronouncement of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie).

I do not think that the Minister has a question of privilege at all. I indicated to you, Sir, that I had a question of privilege given what this absurd Minister said earlier in Question Period. I wish to comment on his accusations.

The Minister has referred to the guiding principles of the House as they pertain to members' franking privileges. The Minister knows full well that the same guiding principles and regulations pertain not only to what I happened to send out on this particular occasion, but to all the householder mail that is sent out by every Member of Parliament, by all Members in all Parties, of any type, including householders to their constituencies. If the Hon. Minister is raising a question of partisanship, which he has, I could take about four days, three hours, and 19 minutes quoting from every one of his members' householders and find in each and every one of them—

An Hon. Member: You could not.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Hon. Minister. I wish that he would listen.

The point that I am making is that if we are talking about partisanship in publications that come from members, it is a common practice for all Members to make partisan comments at times. I have supported that publicly when the question has been raised about other Members in other Parties. All Members of the House know that it is the right of the member

to make partisan comments. That has been practised throughout my experience in Parliament, in householders as well as other publications. That is principally what we were elected to do. I have no apology to make for that.

I wish to comment on the other parts of the Minister's interesting diatribe earlier today. The Hon. Minister talked about printing and mailing. First, who paid for the printing? I will tell you who paid, Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party of Canada. I will comment on the Conservatives and their obligations in a minute.

I have just received a copy of the mailing from the Post Office. Different parts have been checked off. Some members can mail freely. We can, in most publications, and in others we pay for it. Under this, who paid for the mailing? The New Democratic Party paid for the mailing, as well as publications.

The point that the Minister raised, the question of printing: we paid for it, the New Democratic Party. Unlike the Tories and what they put out, which I will come to in a minute, we paid for the mailing.

What about the date that this was sent out to the people of Newfoundland?

Mr. Crosbie: The date doesn't matter.

Mr. Broadbent: He says that the date doesn't matter, because we have caught the Tories spending public funds after an election was called. That is why he says it does not matter. I say to the Minister that to the New Democratic Party it does matter.

Ms. Copps: Don't be so sanctimonious.

Mr. Broadbent: You can get up, madam, and make your points in a moment.

The date does not matter?

Mr. Crosbie: No.

Mr. Broadbent: Apparently some Liberals do not care about this, and I am surprised. I note that it is not the leadership of the Liberal Party.

The date does matter, because once an election has been called, as all Members know, we are under legal obligations about the expenses, which is totally appropriate, and which I thought had been accepted by all Members in the House. What is the date on the matter that the Minister received and to which he objected? I wish to advise the Minister of the date. It was February 19, which was before the writs were issued for the election in St. John's East.

It seems to me that the Minister is striking out on every account. Who paid for the publication? The New Democratic Party. Who paid for the mailing? The New Democratic Party. Was it sent during the election period? Not at all. It was sent before the writs were issued.