

PRIVILEGE**MR. STANFIELD—SURVEILLANCE OF CANDIDATES SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE**

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) yesterday, by way of a question of privilege, expressed concern with regard to matters which arose during the question period and I indicated then, in a preliminary way, and I repeat now, that although I respect the hon. member's suggestion that if I were to adjudicate in a general way he might then put forward a motion, I must say to him that on a number of procedural grounds it is impossible for me to bring the issue into the necessary focus unless I have a motion in front of me. The motion itself may be procedurally correct or otherwise, but in any case it is necessary for me to have a motion before me so that I can adjudicate on it. I will therefore have to leave the matter open for the hon. member to put forward a motion. Should he wish to do so, I would think the matter would be reopened for discussion, depending upon the content of the motion.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Halifax): I have a motion here, Mr. Speaker, which I will move if you find I do have a prima facie case of privilege. It reads as follows:

That the matter of the Solicitor General's refusal to provide information respecting surveillance by the security forces of legitimate political candidates, and his contention that the McDonald commission is the only suitable vehicle to investigate a question affecting the privileges of all members of the House of Commons, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Halifax has raised a subject which is obviously of fundamental importance to the House of Commons and I am sure it is of concern to members. The matter was raised in a general way yesterday. Now that a specific motion is before the House, I wonder if it would not be appropriate to allow time for hon. members to prepare arguments which might be helpful. We did hear some preliminary argument yesterday, but it was advanced without preparation. Now that the specific text of a motion is before us, members might wish to participate at this point in some argument on the merits, or else do so tomorrow after questions, or at the first opportunity, Monday, perhaps. I certainly think it is a matter of grave and fundamental importance if there is any suggestion that candidates for membership in this House are in any way interfered with by reason of an official directive. It is not a point I would wish to treat lightly, or without hearing full argument on both sides of the question.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I made my argument yesterday. I shall be away from the House tomorrow and I do not ask that the matter be delayed, because I do not know what the intentions of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) are with respect to the life of this parliament.

An hon. Member: Neither does he!

Business of the House

Mr. Stanfield: I would be very happy to see the discussion proceed tomorrow in my absence. I have had my say on the matter already.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): That suggestion is acceptable to me, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I should like to make a contribution to the discussion tomorrow. As well, I could before then, perhaps, speak to the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) with regard to the points I shall be making tomorrow and, in the event he has further comments to make, I would be pleased to receive them.

Mr. Speaker: Then it is agreed that the matter stand over for further argument, if any, until tomorrow after questions.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, looking over at the government is like looking over at the living dead.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): But since the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) does not seem to know whether the House will stay or go, or what will happen to it—he seems to be dithering a bit—perhaps I can assume that his seat mate, the government House leader, will be proceeding on the assumption that we are staying. He has given us a list of legislation which includes Bills C-36, C-10, S-8, C-42, S-9 and C-4, indicating that this will be the order in which they will be taken unless changes are made later. Would it not now be appropriate, since we are in this state, for the government House leader to tell us today what are his priorities with respect to legislation as we look to the balance of the session, however long it might be? On the assumption that the Prime Minister has lost his nerve and has decided that parliament should stay, could we be told what the legislative priorities of the government might be quite a way “down the road?”

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member has referred to the announcement of legislation I made on Thursday last. That announcement still stands. I might add that, in accordance with the suggestion of the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), next Wednesday will be designated as an allotted day.

I am quite interested in the suggestion the hon. member has made with regard to legislative priorities “down the road.” I shall be happy to look at the order paper and indicate, at the first opportunity, what legislation we shall be seeking in the next indefinite period. All I will say now to the hon. member is this: he has prefaced all these questions on recent Thursdays by speculating as to whether we shall be here. Well, Mr. Speaker, my track record has been perfect, and the hon. member ought to take my word for it.