

*Privilege—Mr. Nielsen*

the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office have to reach into the House and intimidate its Members. That is the issue. That is why the question of privilege is no frivolous one.

The oldest battle in the history of Parliament has always been how to control the power of the Government and the power of the state. It is as old as Parliament itself. Mr. Speaker, the rights and privileges which you administer for us and your own rights and privileges as Speaker come as a result of the need 400 years ago in England for the Parliament of that day to make sure that the Crown, the state and the government of the day could not reach in and intimidate either the House or its members. In response to the questions of privilege raised in the 1540s when the King commanded that the Speaker do such and so, the Speaker said: "Eyes I have and ears I have only that Parliament will give me".

**Mr. Evans:** The King is a Member of Parliament.

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, the Member across the aisle—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Get in your seat.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The Hon. Member for Rosedale has the floor.

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, there was an intervention by the Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans). He indicated that the Prime Minister was acting as a Member of Parliament. We are not talking about the role of the Prime Minister as a Member of Parliament, but about the role of the Prime Minister's Office as a function of government.

**Mr. Fisher:** Your office does not do anything, David?

**Mr. Crombie:** It is the power of the state to intimidate the House and its Members that we are talking about. That kind of executive power—

**Mr. Fisher:** You are only using your office for the same thing. You are doing the same thing all the time.

**Mr. Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, could I have order, please? I would like order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** It has been a difficult enough day. I appeal to Hon. Members for order. The Hon. Member for Rosedale has the floor.

**Mr. Crombie:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do not need any instructions from Members opposite who do not understand how this House is supposed to function. The Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Fisher) knows no better than to shout at other people. He makes no contribution of his own.

The matter we are talking about has not only been important here but has been important in other countries. The control of executive state power has grown immeasurably in most countries. In democratic countries the way in which we

have done that is to make sure we can contain that power. In the 1970s in the United States that same kind of executive power had internal revenue investigating files of members of Congress and opponents of the government.

A few weeks ago in the House the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) made allegations that through the Prime Minister's Office, through people who are supposed to be public servants, he obtained information alleging certain actions by the Leader of the Opposition. That, Mr. Speaker, is why we worry. We have to nip it in the bud. Any government which thinks that the Prime Minister's Office is a function of politics rather than of political Party, and is not a function of serving the head of government, is a government that you cannot trust with power. That is why Parliament and its privileges has always been the shore against the water that came from those who wished to abuse power.

The second way we contain it, Mr. Speaker, is through the privileges of individual Members. I have been in public life for almost 15 years. I have held positions of power to make decisions affecting other people. I am well aware of the kinds of blandishments, intimidations, threats and muffled threats that come to people in a decision-making process. It is easy to be intimidated. It takes courage not to be intimidated by those who would distort the exercise of responsibilities. That is why it needs something else. The privileges of the House and of each Member of the House are the one factor that allows Members to withstand the pressures from those who would intimidate them. Privileges and rights of Members are not some esoteric, above the ground or misunderstood reality. They are the essential requirement for carrying out our public responsibility.

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If Members are going to be intimidated by the government of the day through the use of files to which only the Prime Minister's Office has access and not other research houses, that becomes the small trickle that grows into a flood and we can no longer depend on Members to carry out their responsibilities.

The day that privileges of the Members of the House and the privileges of the House generally are usurped by the assumption that the Prime Minister's Office is concerned more with politics than with government is the day when your rights, Mr. Speaker, and my rights, and therefore the rights of the people of this country, are in jeopardy.

It is not only through the rights of Parliament and the rights of individual Members that we protect the freedom of this institution and can defend it from the abuse of power by government through the Prime Minister's Office. It is also done through morality. All of the rules of the House, the philosophy that sustains them and all of the freedoms that we enjoy are rooted in a common understanding of how one conducts politics. There is a moral basis to politics. That is why all members of the staff of Ministers and the Prime Minister's Office have the same code of conduct. The Prime Minister indicated otherwise today.