

*Privilege*

individual, and that is my first point. Mr. Speaker, you know and I know and the government Whip should know, that the political system in this country is based on election of individuals who happen to have a party name, and only a party name since 1970.

I say for me at least, and I am not talking about other members who may want their own declarations for whatever reasons, I was elected here without a party label. I have been associated with a party for a good number of years and enjoyed that interesting experience. For other reasons, which I have mentioned here before, I earlier made a declaration that I want to be known as an Independent Conservative. Mr. Speaker, you could not tag me with a label when I came here. Even the government Whip in his earlier statements in this House on September 26 in talking about some of my friends to the left, the Bloc quebecois, started to say that it is clear parliamentary precedent, although he doesn't give any, that members themselves will decide the designation they want to be called or to withdraw the designation they were first elected under, and I totally agree with him.

First, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the political system is that we elect individuals and boy—oh—boy, I can tell you with the malaise out there, you make sure you elect individuals because people are getting pretty fed up with the political system where we all have to do and say the same thing day in and day out.

Anyway, you elect individuals, Mr. Speaker. That is the political system. Let us come to the parliamentary system. The parliamentary system, you know, Mr. Speaker, and I know does not officially recognize parties. It does not recognize parties. We have interesting groupings that have been done through an accommodation over a period of time, but officially, under in the Standing Orders and the Elections Act, you do not see political parties. You do not see any.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the parliamentary system, as distinct from the political system, what you have here are 295 members who for a multitude of reasons. For a multitude of reasons and for obvious reasons in most cases, they have associated themselves with a political party. That is fine. I take no exception to that.

But when a member wants to make a declaration and sit in another capacity and name himself, I say, Mr. Speaker, that is up to the member and he or she will be confronted with that at the next election.

Some of us were here when the member from the province of my friend the government Whip, a fellow called Jack Horner, stood in this House and said he wanted to be known as a Liberal. Did anyone one on the Liberal side stand up and say: "Hey, Jack, you can't come over here because you were elected as a Tory, and therefore you have to stay over there". This is how stupid it is and that is why I am not going to take the time to really over-debate this.

In addition to Jack Horner, you have Ralph Stewart, that peripatetic traveller. When he made the great declaration that he wanted to leave the Liberal Party and come to the Conservative Party without an election, did our government Whip stand up and say: "Hey, Ralph, you had better go back and talk to your people. You can't come with us because you were elected as a Liberal".

John Reid is a little different. He campaigned as a Labour Liberal. I talked to Jean Marc Hamel and on the ballot—and this is why it is irrelevant about the Elections Act—he ran as a Liberal. I understand that I can call myself anything in terms of an election campaign—and I have been called many things—but in terms of when the name goes on the ballot—and that is the way the law is now and I am not debating that at the moment—in terms of the ballot it has to go either in a designated party or as an independent.

Let us take Paul Hellyer and his perambulations between Liberal, Independent and Independent Conservative. Or let us take one who used to be in the cabinet of my friends opposite, the member for Joliette, a fellow called Roch LaSalle who stood up while he was a Conservative under Bob Stanfield and because of problems of language policy, made a declaration from his seat on this side that he wanted to sit as an independent. He went over there where my good friend from Pembina is at the moment, and sat there as an independent. Later he made a statement from over there, saying that he wanted to come back and join the Conservative Party. He was switching around like a yo-yo. Did any government Whip or opposition Whip say: "Hey, Rocco, you can't come over here because you got a label on your back that