

*Privilege—Mr. Robinson*

was subject to that kind of potential threat did not directly come before the committee and speak to the committee of this threat or this attempted coercion, somehow the matter is not serious.

The individuals in question, the senior supervisors in question, appeared as a group with their manager before the justice committee on Monday evening. They were not in any way in a position to make allegations of that nature at that time without, to the best of their understanding, possibly jeopardizing their job.

Of course one always prefers direct evidence. One always prefers the evidence of an individual who was present at a particular meeting. However, I submit, with respect, that it was entirely impossible, given the nature of the alleged pressure which took place, for that to have occurred.

What happened was that an individual who worked with one of those senior supervisors stood before our committee at an *in camera* session and said to the committee, recognizing fully the seriousness of what he was saying, that his supervisor, at a meeting with that supervisor, had alleged that they were subject to this kind of pressure, this kind of potential manipulation, what I have called an attempt to gag or muzzle the witnesses. That individual was not challenged in any way as to his veracity or his credibility by any member of the committee. It was not suggested that somehow he might have been misstating the facts, that his memory might have been flawed, or that perhaps he had it wrong. Members of the committee were free to cross-examine him as they saw fit. That was not done.

I suggest the fact that that parole officer, a professional dedicated public servant, saw fit to raise this concern with members of our committee provides grounds for the finding of a *prima facie* breach of the privileges of Members of the House with respect to the question of evidence and direct evidence.

● (1540)

I now want to comment just briefly on the first allegation I made concerning the transfer of Avery. It has been suggested that everything worked out fine in the end because there was Avery on a conference call from Kingston Penitentiary communicating with members of the committee. It was suggested as well that because I, as one member of the committee, met with Avery there was no attempt at manipulation. There are two key points on that.

First, the remaining members of the inmates committee did not even know, until I informed them about an hour before the meeting took place, that Avery, a key member of that committee, was even going to participate. Second, Avery himself was not even told until I informed him that he would be allowed to communicate with members of the committee.

The final, and in many ways most serious point is that, like any other witness, Avery needed time to prepare properly to

make his representations to our committee. He needed his extensive documents. At no point after he was scooped from Millhaven and sent to Kingston Penitentiary did he have as much as one single sheet of paper with him. His documents were conveniently left behind at Millhaven. It was only that morning, when I insisted that his documents be transferred so I could get authorization to see some of them myself, that they were carted over to him. It was literally while he was on the telephone to members of the committee that they brought him his documents in a box. He opened the box, looked inside and, lo and behold, four of his file folders had disappeared.

I suggest that this is a very serious matter and to suggest that somehow he was able to communicate because he was on the telephone with us is just not adequate.

My final point is this. It has been suggested that somehow there has been a breach of the *in camera* tradition of the committee. To that I respond as follows. I recognize as well as any member of the committee the importance of respecting witnesses who appear before an *in camera* meeting. For that reason I spoke directly with both the individual who made the specific allegation concerning his supervisor having been in effect threatened, if you will, concerning his evidence, and with other witnesses immediately following that. I told them that I viewed this matter very seriously indeed, as I know all of my colleagues did. I asked whether it would be appropriate to raise that particular matter publicly, indeed in the House of Commons itself. I received the full consent of that individual and the other individual with whom I spoke to make this matter public. Indeed, he said he hoped it would be made public because he was deeply concerned about the implications. I think that disposes of the suggestion that there was any breach of propriety.

I am not in any way commenting on the other matter raised in Question Period today and certain other allegations made about information conveyed to our committee. The Hon. Member for York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata) can deal with that, it is up to him. However, in yesterday's Kingston *Whig-Standard* the regional representative of the Public Service Alliance of Canada made some very significant statements on this second aspect of the meeting. I want to close my remarks by bringing this to the attention of the Chair and I will send a copy of this article to Your Honour.

Mr. Bob Boucher, a regional representative of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, told the Kingston *Whig-Standard* this morning that he had complaints last week, from various people working in a range of positions within the CSC, that senior officials were attempting to control testimony given to the parliamentary committee. The complaints were, and I quote Mr. Boucher:

"that the people who were assigned to meet with the committee were by and large handpicked, and they were advised they were not to be critical in their comments," Boucher said.

He said he hoped the committee would "take into account that people are subjected to covert retribution if they were critical".