

Privilege

• (1815)

Increasing the prison population will necessarily increase the related costs. Will the hon. member have the honesty to tell taxpayers how much his bill will cost us? We know that the average cost of keeping an inmate in a maximum security institution in 1992–1993 was as much as \$56,000.

It is my opinion that the three strikes, you are out rule should apply to hon. members in the House: after tabling three bills like the one before us today, an hon. member should automatically be sent home for life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Dear colleagues, I would like to inform you that the Chair has received notice of a question of privilege. I give the floor to the hon. member for Madawaska—Victoria.

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PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR BEAVER RIVER

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette—Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I raise this question of privilege and would like to inform you that if the Chair determines that this is a *bona fide* question of privilege, I am prepared to table the usual motion to refer the issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[English]

I would like to refer to Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 21st edition, p. 126: molestation, reflections and intimidation.

It is a contempt to molest a member of either House while attending the House, or coming to or going from it. The Commons on 12 April 1733 and the Lords on 17 May 1765, resolved 'That the assaulting, insulting or menacing any member of this House, in his coming to or going from the House, or upon the account of his behaviour in Parliament, is a high infringement of the privilege of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament and a high crime and misdemeanour', and on 6 June 1780 the Commons resolved 'That it is a gross breach of the privilege of this House for any person to obstruct and insult the members of this House in the coming to, or the going from the House, and to endeavour to compel members by force to declare themselves in favour of, or against any proposition then depending or expected to be brought before the House'.

It goes on to say in the second paragraph:

To molest members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt. Correspondence with members of an insulting character in reference to their conduct in Parliament or reflecting on their conduct as members, threatening a member with the possibility of a trial—

Earlier this afternoon after the speech by the member for Beaver River, I went to talk with my colleague from Mississauga South. At that time the member for Beaver River came over and challenged me to a debate in my riding. She wanted to know

when I was available. I said I was probably available all summer, that I would be in my riding. She said she would be contacting my office.

Afterward in the discussions, I reinforced what I had said earlier in my speech that as the federal representative for the population of Madawaska—Victoria in regard to the remuneration, the pension and whatever other compensation Parliament allocates to me, I truly believe that I am worth it. It is her problem if she does not believe that she is worth it. The discussion escalated to a point where, Mr. Speaker, I think you rose.

• (1820)

At the same time, the whip from the Reform Party came behind the curtains and told us to bring the level of discussion down. I told the whip to take the member for Beaver River away from where I was standing. I turned to go back to my seat. It was not a question of my falling; I was turning to go back to my seat in order to end that discussion. At that time the member grabbed me by the arm.

Mr. Speaker, I have been a parliamentarian since 1987. I have never, either in the House where I was sitting, outside the House or in my riding, ever received any such physical threat.

I do wish, Mr. Speaker, that you will be ruling on this as soon as possible because I find that absolutely no member in this House, whether a man or a woman, should be assaulted physically. I was sent here to speak my views and the views of my constituents. That is what Parliaments are all about, to speak and to discuss. This is not a boxing match. I do wish that you will rule very soon on this point of privilege.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do hope we can address this now and clear it up just as quickly as possible.

The member is right. I did go over and we did have a rather heated exchange about whether I would come to her riding. When she told me to get out of here and my whip said to call it off, she told me to get real and to get out of here. She said that she turned around to go back to her seat and she did. However, as it was a heated exchange, she did turn around. I was on one step higher than she was and she whirled around and I grabbed her elbow and said: "Come on, let's be reasonable here".

I do apologize for that. I certainly did not mean any harm or assault. I am twice her size. It is just foolishness to think that. I do apologize if she thought there was any intention of an assault. However, this is now on the floor of the House of Commons. I might just mention that in my short discussion of this afterward, and it seems unfortunate that we have to take up House time with this, the member for Huron—Bruce said: "I was here and this is