

*Privilege—Mr. Nielsen*

**Mr. McGrath:** It was a false inducement, as my colleague says. We agreed, and my colleague, the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie), asked for the necessary unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment. Unanimous consent was granted, and we withdrew it. When we came to the relevant section and the government indicated on behalf of the Liberal party—and that is a matter of public record; they did not say “On behalf of the government”; they said “On behalf of the Liberal members of the committee”—when we arrived at the relevant section we were told, “The deal is off; there is no deal.”

That is a serious matter, Madam Speaker. This place cannot function if we cannot accept the word of a minister speaking on behalf of the government. The most serious breach of parliamentary privilege that an hon. member can be guilty of in this House is to accuse another hon. member of deliberately lying. And rightly so, because that speaks to the fact that the system, the institution, has to get by on the honour and integrity of the members. Without that there would be chaos. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that my privileges as a member of this House have been grossly and deliberately violated.

● (1540)

I have no quarrel or criticism to make of the hon. gentleman who presides, on behalf of this House, over that committee. Indeed, he has done so with distinction, and with honour, and with impartiality. I hope I will have a chance to refer to that at some other point. He indicated what the rules were according to the advice he received from his table officers. He indicated that he was not permitted to rule on my question of privilege, that he could only entertain a motion that the matter be referred to Your Honour, who is the only person who could so rule. The Liberal majority on the committee voted against having the matter referred to the House so that Your Honour could rule.

**Mr. Nielsen:** That is the biggest wrong.

**Mr. McGrath:** Where do I turn? How do I get redress?

There has been gross deception, and there is no question about that. If you say that your hands are tied because of the rules of this place then, Madam Speaker, I submit to you with the greatest respect that, as the custodian of our rights, individually and collectively, and as the custodian of our minority rights, it is incumbent upon you to address this anomaly in the rules and to suggest that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization where it can be dealt with immediately. Otherwise I am not capable, under the rules, of doing that, because I am subject to the whims and fancies of the majority in this House, and the majority in this House would never entertain such a motion from me even if it were procedurally acceptable. Only Your Honour, with the weight of the position that you carry in this place, can make such a recommendation where it would have any weight. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that this is a very, very, serious matter.

We have to deal with the government in this place and in the committees of this place on a day-to-day basis. We have to accept the word of the government with respect to legislation. If the government gives its word, in exchange for certain commitments we make with regard to a certain provision of a bill, and if the government does not keep that word, then, Madam Speaker, where do we turn? With respect we can only turn to you. We can only turn to you as the one to whom we have entrusted the custodianship of our rights and privileges. I believe that you, in your wisdom and in your experience as a member of this House, indeed as a minister of the Crown, realize the gravity of the matter that has been brought to your attention formally by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). I believe in your own mind that you appreciate the fact that I am entitled to redress. I humbly submit to you, Madam Speaker, that I can only obtain that redress from you.

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova):** Madam Speaker, as a member I realize the almost absurd position one is in, in having to talk in abstract terms about what is unmentionable according to the rules.

I would like to suggest, with great deference, that the proposition put forward by my hon. colleague that you use the weight of your office to approach the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien), the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), or someone on behalf of the government opposite, to refer the matter back to the committee, be followed so that this impasse can be resolved here in the chamber.

Without drawing too long a bow I can recall that there was considerable discussion about whether a committee was in fact the master of its own house, so to speak, with respect to allowing television coverage of the committee. In that case there was real controversy whether this committee could determine that matter or whether the House had to do it. Eventually, as I recall, the House of Commons, through the Prime Minister, had to give direction to the committee to make it possible to have its proceedings televised according to the wishes of certain members of this House.

Therefore, with respect to this very important procedural matter, would it not be possible for you, Your Honour, to go to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, or to whomever you please, to have this matter reconsidered in the committee? By doing this, at least Your Honour could have, without any possible confusion, the complete jurisdiction to deal with this proposition, to rule on it, and therefore exercise your prerogative as the custodian of our rights.

**Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Madam Speaker, I have a few words to say about this particular question. At the outset I should say that I think your patience and good will have been somewhat stretched this afternoon by the kind of debate we have heard from the other side. In essence what we are hearing is a debate on the same question that took place yesterday, a question on which you have reserved judgment.

I find it rather odd to hear the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) talk about the Speaker making a refer-