

involved, asking him whether he has received a grant application, whether it is in order, whether it has been approved and, if so, when the cheque will be issued. In the case to which reference was made relating to the picture, I was asked to do that. I then committed myself to my constituent, who is a member of that organization, to check into the matter. I called the minister's office and the minister said that, yes, in fact, the grant had been approved and the cheque was being processed now. I asked him where the cheque was because those people were badly in need of the funds—it was an organizational grant for some \$41,000—and I asked whether we could get the cheque to them as fast as possible. The minister said that he was preparing to present that cheque but, if it was urgent, I could deliver it to them. I said, "Yes, please", and then I called the organization and said, "Will you please pick up the cheque in my office, or we will put it in the mail", to which the organization said clearly that they preferred to have it sooner rather than later and not risk it being sent by the mails—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Evans: As a result, the secretary—not the president or any other official of the organization—was sent to my office by the organization, and I delivered the cheque on that very same day it had been delivered to me by the minister—

Mr. Nielsen: With the cameras and the press present.

Mr. Evans: At the same time I called our own caucus research people and asked that a photographer be sent there for that purpose.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Evans: The point is that if you are concerned about your constituents, then you make it a practice of finding out what are your constituents' needs, and if they have a concern, you look into it for them. I did just that, and I have no regrets whatsoever. In fact, I will continue to do the same thing in the future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, I would just like to speak for a moment on this subject and refer to a statement by the hon. member from the NDP who said that if this is happening it is a corruption of the political process, or something to that effect. Naturally I would agree with those remarks. Apparently it is happening because he has produced evidence in one case, and I am sure there are others who can produce similar evidence. However, I believe in fairness—and this is probably the first time I will have said anything good about members on the other side of the House—

An hon. Member: Easy.

Mr. Cossitt: I must be sick today. Perhaps what is done in my constituency could be adopted as a model for other constituencies. For example, the Minister of State for Trade (Mr.

Privilege—Mr. Rae

Lumley) came down to speak to the chamber of commerce in my constituency last week and announced the allocation of grants for the city of Brockville and the town of Gananoque. He then made the statement that these grants were due directly to representations made by the member for Leeds-Grenville. I thought that was being very fair. I would like to say that there are two sides to this coin.

An hon. Member: They are afraid of you.

Mr. Cossitt: In any event, I suggest that if all ridings could be treated the same as mine in this regard, there would be no complaints, but apparently they are not. The answer is that if all cheques for these grants could go through the sitting member, regardless of his political affiliation, that may well resolve the problem. For example, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin)—whose attention was drawn to this—was involved in a similar situation. She made a statement at that time that in the future she would forward cheques through the sitting member regardless of politics. Someone cut that off somewhere along the line. I think if that practice were followed, and the other ministers did the same thing, no one would have cause for complaint.

I agree with the member for the NDP that we are all here because the people in our own ridings elected us. We are here, whether we are Liberal, Conservative or NDP, to represent all the people in the riding, and when a cheque is presented, it is not a Liberal Party gift, it is not a government gift, it is a grant which is allocated, supposedly, regardless of the politics which exist in that riding. That is the way it should be.

Perhaps I should sit down now. I said too much that is favourable about the government, which I never should do.

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, I will not prolong this discussion for long, but, since I seem to be involved to some degree, it might be useful if I participated in the discussion for a moment.

I would like to argue, if I may, that, of course, this may well be an airing of a grievance by the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae), but it is not a legitimate question of privilege. I do not believe, and I think the case has been made by others on similar questions of privilege in recent weeks, that the members' privileges to perform in this House and to perform for their constituents are being abrogated.

I wanted to make something clear which I think has been passed over. As the Minister of State for Multiculturalism, I must make decisions on all grants and contributions. It is finally my neck on whether I decide in favour or against on the establishment of policy, subject to cabinet concurrence, and so on. As such, when any grant or contribution goes to any particular group of Canadians or to a constituency, I am responsible. I could lose my job, I could be fired or I could be criticized by any member of the House if I have not performed that duty in a proper manner.