

Speaker's Ruling

The hon. parliamentary secretary has said that he accepts completely the word of the hon. member. He has accepted completely, as he has said, my ruling.

The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair seems to indicate that what took place with these students is not as important as an argument that he may be having with the hon. parliamentary secretary. He can have the argument with the parliamentary secretary, but I have to tell you as your Speaker that I take very seriously these demonstrations in this place. Apart from anything else, I am in charge of the security of this entire place. While that has not been raised in the argument, I am intensely conscious of it.

The other thing I am intensely conscious of is this. It is all very well for members of the public these days to say that they have no respect for politicians. They may not have respect for some politicians, but if this country loses respect for this institution, I would like to know what it wants to substitute it with.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may want to raise this matter in another way, but for now the matter is concluded. The motion stripped of the allegation against the hon. member—and properly stripped of the allegation against the hon. member—has now been accepted by the House. If the hon. member wants to raise it at another time of course we will hear him.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, we have all listened to your thoughtful words and of course accept your decision, but I think there is something else that we have to deal with before we proceed. We are most anxious to examine the whole matter of demonstrations and what that does to the reputation of this House. That has been dealt with appropriately, Mr. Speaker, upon your recommendation.

I look now, through you, Mr. Speaker, to my hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary who made some very serious charges against the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair. When you, Sir, indicated that you found no prima facie case of privilege, the parliamentary secretary said that he had no problem with your decision. Those were his words. He had no problem with your decision. I assume that that means he accepts the decision.

However, I appeal to my hon. friend in the best interest of this institution. In that a member's word is

paramount and having made those very serious charges against my colleague, I would ask my friend, the parliamentary secretary, to stand now and do what would be expected of the hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I am in a bit of a difficult spot. I am in this spot simply—

Ms. Mitchell: You've got yourself into this.

Mr. Cooper: Perhaps members would hear me out and let me explain what I mean by being in a difficult spot. I have said very clearly that I do accept the Speaker's ruling. I think it is a wise ruling.

Second, I do accept the word of the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair. Now I have a difficulty. I listened very carefully to the Speaker's ruling. I do not have the "blues" of that ruling so I am going from memory. The Speaker spoke of what prima facie evidence is. Prima facie evidence is evidence that is put forward which is believed to be true until circumstances prove it otherwise.

When I rose in the House, I rose on a case of privilege based on evidence which I believed to be prima facie. Since that time events have taken place that have been reflected in the Speaker's ruling which I accept totally and completely, including the words of the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair. It is difficult for me to apologize for a statement I made in the House when I believed those statements to be true and then to deny them. That is the problem I have, and I cannot deny those statements that I made at the time.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong this matter. We have important work to get to, but I regret that my hon. friend has chosen this particular course of action. He knows now, upon reflection and the very learned decision you have brought to the Chamber, that his charges and accusations were false. He acknowledges that fact.

I certainly think that this would be an appropriate place for the hon. member to withdraw those remarks and apologize to my hon. colleague from Windsor—St. Clair, in the best interests of this institution. After all, we have to work together. We want to work together. However, when those charges still lie in the air in spite of your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I think it is most unfortunate for the future operations of this great institution.