



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

ETHI • NUMBER 028 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, March 8, 2012

—
Chair

Ms. Jean Crowder

Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Thursday, March 8, 2012

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP)): Good morning, members.

I have a piece of information. I tabled the committee's report this morning on the CBC. The clerk will send the link to it to all members so that you have the official report that's now in the House.

This is meeting number 28, and we are still on the motion and the amendment. You've all got a copy before you of the motion that was tabled by Mr. Del Mastro and the amendment.

We will continue with the speakers list, and I'll just remind members of the speakers list. Mr. Andrews had the floor, and the speakers I had after Mr. Andrews were Monsieur Dusseault, Monsieur Morin, Mr. Butt, and Mr. Angus.

We're on the amendment. I will just remind members that the amendment from Mr. Andrews was that the motion be amended by adding after the word "Parliament" the following: "the committee examine all government resources used on Twitter accounts".

I will turn the floor back to Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's nice to be back in Centre Block again, even though we don't have the technology that we do in some of our other committee rooms. It would be nice to look at getting that available, especially the Internet. It helps in doing some research, as you're doing committee work. It's funny that in this building we don't have access to that.

Thank you very much.

Well, let's just recap where we're to on this particular motion. We've got a motion from the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, who is again not here today to discuss his own motion before this very committee. His motion called on Mr. Adam Carroll, former Liberal Research Bureau employee, for one meeting to examine his use of House of Commons resources in order to conceal his anonymous public attacks on a member of Parliament, and that this meeting take place, as amended by Ms. Davidson, by Thursday, March 13, 2012.

The Speaker had ruled on this very question that this case of privilege is now closed, and then the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister came to this committee. I'd like to quote him here: "I don't see any relevance of a ruling by the Speaker of the House of Commons."

Obviously the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister has no confidence in his own Speaker.

The chair then ruled the motion out of order, that it doesn't relate to this committee, and gave a ruling.

Once again the rogue Conservatives at this committee didn't get their own way, so they overturned—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Calkins, a point of order.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Chair, in the last meeting I was hopeful that Mr. Andrews would respect the tradition here at Parliament. Once a Speaker for the House of Commons is chosen by the members of Parliament, it's quite clear in the traditions and in the rules and so on that the Speaker is generally not counted upon in any partisan way.

This is the second time I've heard Mr. Andrews, through his identification, as subtle as it may be, saying that it was Mr. Del Mastro's Speaker. The Speaker of the House of Commons is in fact the Speaker for all members of the House of Commons, including Mr. Andrews, who had the secret ballot privilege of choosing the Speaker he decided to choose or vote for.

It is inappropriate and against the rules we abide by, as members of Parliament, to impugn the reputation of the Speaker in any way, shape, or form by suggesting the Speaker is politically aligned in his decisions or motives for making a ruling. I would caution Mr. Andrews that this is the second time he's chosen to go this route by identifying or aligning the Speaker's ruling or decision with that of a particular member of Parliament or a particular political party.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): A point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: I'm speaking on a point of order, Mr. Angus. You've been here long enough to know that you can't interrupt a point of order with a point of order.

So I would encourage Mr. Andrews to get back into the rules.

And I would ask you, Chair, to rule on the admissibility of some of the comments Mr. Andrews has made. Your role, as chair here, is that of a representative of not only this committee but also in the sense that this committee was constructed by a standing order from that House of Commons, and your place, as chair, is to oversee it to make sure those rules are upheld.

• (1105)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Calkins.

I didn't pick up the language that inferred Mr. Andrews was suggesting the Speaker was aligned with a political party. I didn't hear that. But I would caution Mr. Andrews, if that were the case that of course Mr. Calkins is absolutely correct. The Speaker is an impartial arbiter in the House, and there should be no inferences that the Speaker is politically motivated by any political party.

A point of order, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes, because I think it's very important to clarify what Mr. Andrews was speaking about: he talked about Mr. Del Mastro not having confidence in the work of the Speaker because the Speaker ruled, and then Mr. Calkins attempted to make that into a political statement. But we have to go back to the issue that the party showed a lack of confidence in the ruling of the chair of this committee.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Angus—

Mr. Charlie Angus: This is why we're dealing with this. They've overruled you—

The Chair: Mr. Angus—

Mr. Charlie Angus: —so they're showing no respect to you or to the chair or the Speaker.

The Chair: Mr. Angus, I'm not clear that that's a point of order.

Mr. Andrews, I'll come back to you—if you could make sure that any of your remarks don't reflect that the Speaker has any political motivation in any rulings that he makes.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I never made any political reference. I used the words “own Speaker”, our Speaker. It's funny how the rules down in the other chamber get brought up by members of the opposition: “Oh, you have to play by those rules down in the chamber there; you can't call in the impartiality of the Speaker. We want to play by that rule down there.” But when down there, in that other House, the Speaker makes a ruling.... I just want to quote that part of the ruling: “The interim leader of the Liberal Party then rose to inform the House that he himself had intended to rise on a question of privilege, having been informed on February 26—”

The Chair: Mr. Andrews, could you read slowly for the interpreters? Thank you.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I'm sorry. Thank you, Madam Chair. I get very excited and, as I said last week, my Newfoundland dialect gets a little away from me at times. I'll continue:

...having been informed on February 26, that it was an employee of the Liberal research bureau who had been responsible for the vikleaks30 site. The interim leader offered his unequivocal apology and that of the Liberal Party to the minister.

In view of this unconditional apology made personally by the member and on behalf of his party as a whole, and in keeping with has been done in similar circumstances in the past, I am prepared to consider this particular aspect of the question of privilege closed.

So it's finished—that's my word—“closed”, done, over with, and we respect the ruling of the Speaker. But then we come back to this place and this committee room, which is an offshoot of Parliament, and we hear “No, no, no, it's not closed. It's not dealt with. We want to take this back and revisit this particular thing over again.”

So I say to Mr. Calkins, you can't have it both ways. You can't have it both ways: you can't pick and choose which rules you like to apply to yourself—

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Andrews.

He's directing his remarks through the chair to you.

Thank you, Mr. Andrews. Continue.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Where were we? The chair then ruled the motion out of order because of reasons mentioned before, and it doesn't relate to this committee. Once again, the rogue Conservatives across the way didn't get their way, so they overturned the ruling of the chair. They have the majority in this Parliament. I understand that's probably a bit of payback for years of a minority Parliament. They want to flex their muscles around this place because they have the numbers to do so. I get that, and I understand that will go on for some period of time. But at some point in life I think the government party has to start acting like a government and rise above all this. I would challenge the Conservative government and hope they would do that.

Here we are. We're left to deal with the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister's attack on a former Liberal staffer and the apology. We're back to my amendment and where we left off. That recaps where we got to last week. So, back to Twitter and all the Twitter Ollys out there.

Before we clued up on Tuesday, I was talking about Cory Hann, press secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. We were going to talk about his Tweet and his use of government resources. I pointed out the lovely picture of him at his office desk on Parliament Hill or in the government office somewhere with the parliamentary calendar there and his couple of BlackBerrys going, because he's tuned in like a diligent political staffer would be.

I made a Tweet of what happened in the House and I read that out last week. I don't think I need to read that out again, about Peter Penashue patting Minister Ashfield on the back. Then this unidentified person came back to me and said,

False. Question was not on Makkovik. Better ques is when will Lib's quit using this tragedy for political gain? #nlpoli#cdnpoli

So I said very good, let's see who this is. The thing about Twitter is that you can reply and include the people you use, and every time he replies he deletes the part about Peter Penashue, because he doesn't want to see people he's Tweeting back at his minister.

That was two. And three.... I'm just getting the order here, because it's hard to print it. Then I came back at him, at Cory Hann:

I say you listen to the question again...better question is why is the Member from Labrador so silent on this @PeterPenashue

That was very good.

Then Mr. Hann comes back at me again at Scott Andrews, MP:

Labrador MP has not been silent. He's made personal contact with family. Unlike you, he's not using this for grandstanding

Very good. So this is where I thought I'd call out Mr. Hann. Then I went back to him, at Cory Hann:

interesting some Ottawa staffer has to pick up for the Minister as he can't speak for himself @PeterPenashue

And Peter Penashue is the Minister for Newfoundland.

In the meantime, I said I have to find out who this Cory Hann guy is. Google is a wonderful thing; you can type it in. I found out he is a defeated Conservative candidate from a provincial election in Cape Breton, not even from Newfoundland, and picking up for our minister back home. So this is the crux of where this gets to, and I'll tie it in here.

My Twitter handle is @ScottAndrewsmp, if anyone would like to use it. Here we go: "As a Caper"—and I assume that means a Cape Bretoner, and there are some great Cape Bretoners out there, and I respect that—"and Pres Sec", press secretary, "it's my job (and instinct) to correct the record, which is what I'm doing with you, Scott".

Very good. We called them out, and he identified himself on Twitter that he was a press secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to the minister responsible for Labrador. That was interesting and it carried on for a couple more Tweets. What was interesting is.... We'll go to his picture. I showed you his picture, but underneath—and it's @CoryHann—it follows you, so he's following me and perhaps other members of this committee. And then you put a little bio in of what you do on Twitter and just a little bit about yourself. "Interesting things about me go on here, hence the vast emptiness". Well, I won't comment on that; that's self-explanatory.

• (1110)

Very good. "And naturally, the usual caveat, all twits"—that's an interesting way to put it—"are of my own view". All his twits and tweets are of his own view. That was interesting.

Then a couple of other people started to jump on Mr. Hann at this particular time. A Jennifer MacKinnon said "@PeterPenashue You tweet hockey while @coryhann hassles other MPs undisclosed as your staffer in profile". That's a very good point.

Then a little while later, she came back again: "@coryhann When communication aides and secretaries to MPs tweet, should they not disclose their positions in their profiles?" I thought that was a very, very good question, because they should disclose in their profiles.

So I did a little search of my own yesterday and came up with the numerous press secretaries each minister has at his or her disposal in the Government of Canada. I had a little surf to see what they do. Some of them, to their credit, do declare in their profiles that they're ministers' press secretaries. That's fair. There are a few there who do not. I notice that they're sort of the political types. They are defeated candidates and that kind of thing. They don't declare that they're working for a minister at the time. But it's clearly obvious, when you go back to their feed, that they do pick up for their ministers. A number of them usually put in there "tweets are my own", "own tweets", or "these are my own thoughts". They put in that little caveat, as Mr. Hann pointed out.

The use of government resources on Twitter seems to be widespread, and fair enough, because it is a way to communicate. But you know, I think we have a duty to announce who we're tweeting on and to put our full profiles up there, because part of Mr.

Del Mastro's motion says "in order to conceal his anonymous public attacks", and it's talking about concealing evidence of who the people are out there on Twitter.

We talk about government resources. When they put in this caveat that all tweets are their own, well, if they're their own, shouldn't they be doing them on their own time, in their private time? Fair enough. But they seem to sit down at their desks and tweet away all day long and do it on the payroll. That's fine, because you know, we do it. I understand that. It's a way of communicating. I'm not belittling it, but I think we need to be crystal clear, across all governments, that when we tweet, we should disclose ourselves. We shouldn't conceal.

Mr. Carroll will come forward, and I assume that he will apologize for concealing that, and that's something we'll discuss. Obviously that relates to the motion at hand.

I thought I'd just share that little tidbit with you about a government political operative out there doing his job, as the minister directs him to, rather than doing things for his department and keeping on top of everybody's tweets.

Interestingly enough, last week at committee, on that last day at committee, I got called to task by Mr. Dreeshen. I just want to quote from the evidence from last week. He said, "On a point of order, I'm just curious. I see no one over here who is putting out tweets, and a comment like that is completely unnecessary." And some honourable member from that side said, "unsubstantiated, just like everything else coming out". Then the chair brought everything back to order.

But it was a funny thing, a funny thing. Blaine Calkins MP was tweeting at 2:23 p.m. while we were in committee. Really.

Mr. Calkins, meet Mr. Dreeshen. Mr. Dreeshen, meet Mr. Calkins. I'd like you guys to get to know each other.

And the tweet Mr. Calkins read out—

• (1115)

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Calkins.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: For the edification of the members of this committee, could you please enlighten us as to what time this committee sits?

The Chair: The committee sits from eleven until one.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Oh, good, because I think he's—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): It's not 2:23—that's his point, Scott. You'll get on to it later. It will make sense to you in a little while.

Mr. Scott Andrews: What...? Okay. Maybe I made a mistake on that. I apologize.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): At least one

Mr. Scott Andrews: But that could be Newfoundland time, because I took it off my Twitter account, which would really put that back into perspective. But we'll get back to that in a minute.

Yes, I think maybe it was Newfoundland time, so that would put it back into....

I'll read the tweet, because the tweet sort of tells the tale here: "Looks like an NDP/Liberal filibuster at ethics committee today". So, "at ethics committee today", meaning I'm at ethics committee today. It says, "Wonder what they are afraid of?" It was sent like—

The Chair: Mr. Andrews, I have a point of order.

Monsieur Dusseault.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): I checked my Twitter stream properly, and it is 12:53 p.m. According to the information provided to me by Twitter, Mr. Calkins tweeted a message at 12:53 p.m. The message Mr. Andrews is referring to was posted during the committee meeting.

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Dusseault, I don't think that's actually a point of order. Thank you.

Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews: We've got it figured out over here. We've got it figured out: "Wonder what they are afraid of?"

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Us.

Mr. Scott Andrews: No, no. They were referring to us, thank you.

Welcome back, Mr. Del Mastro. I'm glad you're—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Fearless on this side of the table.

The Chair: Just one moment, please.

Mr. Del Mastro, if you'd like to be on the speakers list, would you signal that to the clerk?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm just happy to be here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: You don't have the floor. Thank you very much.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm just happy to be here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm learning a lot. Please—

Mr. Scott Andrews: Madam Chair, I'm happy too, that he's here today. I'm glad we've established that.

Okay, wondering what they're afraid of... Absolutely nothing: when it was discovered that Mr. Adam Carroll had done this and disclosed this, what did we do? We accepted his resignation immediately. Then, when the House rose the next day, we came back, owned up to it, and made an unequivocal apology. We said we were sorry. I'll get to the apology a little later. I don't want to forget that; I have that note there.

It's funny what they're afraid of. I would ask one of the Conservatives how many times they go in camera in committee meetings and what they're afraid of. And when we deal with a filibuster... I'm just delighted that this committee is now dealing with something that's not in camera. We're not in these secret meetings that the Conservatives like to put forward. When they get a motion on something they don't like, they quickly go into a secret

meeting so we don't hear anybody talk about the battles in the Conservative Party.

We're not afraid of anything. We're not filibustering. We're just glad to be able to come to the committee and have a chat, an open discussion about things. I know that's something new, but it's a new policy of the Conservatives now to do things in open meetings, and I'm looking forward to doing a bit more of that.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Point of order, Madam Chair.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Good. I needed to get my thoughts together. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro on a point of order.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'd just like to clarify... I'm not aware that Mr. Andrews had suggested moving in camera. If he did, he might find support for that. He has alleged that there's a new practice here at the committee. I'm not aware of that. But in fact had Mr. Andrews moved that we move in camera for the discussion of this motion or others, he might have found support for that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Del Mastro.

I didn't hear any motion from Mr. Andrews, so we'll come back to Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews: No siree, I don't want to go in camera at all.

I'd like to correct the record with Mr. Del Mastro on in camera. We've seen it many, many times, Mr. Del Mastro, so don't try to cloud the waters here. If you'd like to go in camera—

The Chair: Mr. Andrews—

Mr. Scott Andrews: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. Sorry.

The Chair: Yes, thank you—through the chair, please.

Thank you.

Mr. Scott Andrews: It's interesting that we do some things in camera, Madam Chair, and some things out of camera, depending on what the Conservatives opposite want to do. Maybe they'd like to go in camera. Maybe Mr. Del Mastro, when he calls Mr. Carroll here, would like to take that discussion in camera instead of trying to drag this gentleman through the media circus and through this.

I would like to see, when we get to that stage, whether Mr. Del Mastro would actually like to go in camera so that we don't impugn, or penalize, this individual any more than he already has been.

Getting back to the motion at hand here, I like how Mr. Del Mastro talks about public attacks on a member of Parliament.

You know, I'm new to this place. I was elected in 2008. It was a very interesting time in my first couple of years here. We made some changes. My little party was going through some tough times. We elected a new leader by the name of Michael Ignatieff. It was very interesting. As soon as Mr. Ignatieff was elected, we had some personal attacks come from the Conservative Party: "He's just visiting". That was their famous line: "He's just visiting". He went away to university. He did well for himself. But they liked to attack that he was just visiting. They love public attacks when that comes forward.

Then their next line was, "He's not in it for you".

• (1125)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Am I wrong?

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: “He didn’t come back for you”—please.

The Chair: That’s not a point of order, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Scott Andrews: He didn’t come back for you. He’s not in it for you.

The Chair: Mr. Andrews, please direct your comments through the chair, please.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I’m sorry. Thank you. Keep reminding me, please, Madam Chair.

It’s interesting that they went through this public attack on a member of Parliament. They had no problem with it. Bring it on. As long as we can do it, it’s all right, but if anyone else talks about anything, it’s a public attack, and we shouldn’t be doing it. It’s bad.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): We didn’t hide it, like your guy did.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I think Mr. Butt is on the speakers list, Madam Chair.

The Chair: If I could interrupt, gentlemen and madam, if you wish to be on the speakers list, could you please signal your intention to the clerk?

Thank you, Mr. Del Mastro. We’ll put you on the list.

Otherwise, I would appreciate a little order in the room.

Mr. Andrews, please continue.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

These public attacks continued. As we say back home, what’s good for the goose is good for the gander. We’ll see. We’ll just leave that one for the time being.

I’m glad that Mr. Butt interjected, as well, because I’d like to respond to some of the things he added to the debate last week under this. Just to recap, for everybody’s memory:

Madam Chairman, I don’t think the member has read the motion, because the motion is about House of Commons resources. That’s what this motion is for the committee to investigate, not all this other wild, crazy stuff.

This whole motion is wild and crazy stuff. I find that ironic.

It’s one meeting, one individual, where we’re asking him to come forward to talk about his use of House of Commons resources in this issue.

He didn’t think the member had read the motion. I don’t know how much reading Mr. Butt has done since he’s been here, Madam Chair.

Mr. Brad Butt: Lots.

Mr. Scott Andrews: I’m glad he’s indicating “lots”, because one of the things we use our resources for is the mandate of committees—and the mandate of this committee.

I’d like to look at Standing Order 108(3)(h) of the House of Commons, where it talks about “Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics shall include, among other matters:”

the review of and report on the effectiveness, management and operation together with the operational and expenditure plans relating to the Information Commissioner;

the review of and report on the effectiveness, management and operation together with the operational and expenditure plans relating to the Privacy Commissioner; the review of and report on the effectiveness, management and operation together with the operational and expenditure plans relating to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner;

the review of and report on reports of the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest and the Ethics Commissioner with respect to his or her responsibilities under the Parliament of Canada Act relating to public office holders and on reports tabled pursuant to the Lobbyists Registration Act, which shall be severally deemed permanently referred to the Committee immediately after they are laid upon the Table;

Then it goes on a little further, putting out the mandate of our committee.

Our mandate at committee has no dealing with the House of Commons resources. That’s better referred to in the other committee, the parliamentary affairs committee.

I’d say, Madam Chair, that we should make sure all members of the committee have a copy of the Standing Orders and they could read them in their spare time.

We’re talking about the use of House of Commons resources. We’re all issued four devices, and they’re BlackBerrys. The House of Commons resources people are very, very tight on what we can do with these devices. We’re not allowed to download apps. We’re not allowed to put things that we could use for our jobs on this, or any social...cooking apps and things of that nature. I like the Air Canada app. We travel a lot, and we can’t even get that downloaded onto our devices.

A little while ago the House of Commons decided that Twitter and Facebook apps were going to be allowed on BlackBerrys. Interestingly enough, we’ve got them on all our BlackBerrys; all our staff get to use those same devices. One would be led to believe you’re allowed to use Twitter and Facebook, because the House of Commons has allowed you to put them on your BlackBerrys.

We’re allowed to use the House of Commons resources on our devices, so this motion is truly bizarre.

I’d like to direct our attention to another part of the motion, where we’re talking about a former Liberal research employee. We’re going to talk about—

• (1130)

The Chair: I need to remind you that we are on your amendment rather than the original motion. You’ll have an opportunity to speak to the original motion once this amendment is dealt with.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Okay. I thought my motion was the whole thing, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We’re dealing with the amendment, and the text is on the bottom of the sheet.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Fair enough. So can I come back to that when we get back to the motion?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Okay. Well, I will probably leave it at that for right now. I do want to come back.

Mr. Clerk, you can put me back on the speakers list, please, to speak to the motion at hand. I do have some interesting facts I'd like to talk about.

In closing, on the Twitter, and we're talking about my amendment on government resources, let's examine them. Let's look at all these government resources and House of Commons resources; it's one and the same. We should look at whether people should disclose themselves and let people know exactly who they're tweeting, in the fairness of open government and honesty and transparency, which I'm sure we'll hear some Conservative member talk about. This will be a great opportunity to talk about open government.

That's where we're at on this particular one. I just want to make sure we come back to this at some point, to finish discussing some of the other things we have.

I'll leave it at that for now, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Andrews.

I now have Monsieur Dusseault.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am very happy to take the floor once again today and follow up on the comments of my colleague, who added a number of interesting points to his motion in amendment. Of course, we are now talking only about the amendment in order to comply with the committee rules and make sure not to veer toward the motion we will discuss later.

I think it's very interesting that the amendment suggests tracking all the use of government resources, in particular on Twitter. I think that is a fairly broad issue that could be worth looking into.

We know that all members, all employees, with access to a BlackBerry automatically have Twitter and Facebook applications. We could perhaps even add Facebook to the motion and talk about it later. Facebook is also a social media tool that can be used in the same way as Twitter.

However, I will not get into the details of that issue today, unless we can agree to a friendly amendment that would add Facebook to Mr. Andrews' amendment, if he is okay with that. That would be a possible amendment. If the topic is social media and our BlackBerry applications as parliamentary resources, I think we could add Facebook to the amendment. That is, of course, if Mr. Andrews agrees.

[*English*]

The Chair: Monsieur Dusseault, are you moving a subamendment?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Friendly amendment.

The Chair: There's no such thing as a friendly amendment. This is a subamendment. We need the wording of your subamendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: It would simply be a matter of adding to the amendment that the committee should look into all government resources used on Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Therefore, I suggest that we add "and Facebook" to the amendment, after the word "Twitter".

That way, we would be consistent when it comes to our use of social media.

•(1135)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Monsieur Dusseault. We are now just on the subamendment of adding Facebook. Could you speak to your subamendment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: I thought that we could make a friendly amendment and that Mr. Andrews would agree. That would have been similar to what we did last time, when Ms. Davidson proposed a friendly amendment to the main motion on the date change. I thought this could be done in the same way.

[*English*]

The Chair: I have to see if there's unanimous consent from the committee to accept the subamendment as presented. Otherwise, we will need to debate the subamendment.

Is there unanimous consent—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No.

The Chair: There is not unanimous consent, so we need to proceed with your subamendment on adding Facebook.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: I could talk about this for a long time. Facebook is another very important element, in terms of parliamentary resources. Facebook and Twitter are both being used. I often use them at the same time. If we punch in the pound key followed by the letters "fb" at the end of our tweets, we can automatically add a tweet on Facebook. It could be worthwhile to discuss that, which is why I am asking for an amendment.

If we want to get to the bottom of things when it comes to Twitter, why not do the same in terms of Facebook use? I think that's very important. Facebook is also often used to play partisan politics. People use it to promote their party's positions, or simply to talk about current events. Often, people share information they believe is true, or untrue.

If we pass an amendment like the one moved by Mr. Andrews, regarding Twitter, I think we would also have to talk about Facebook. If we were to conduct a study on the use of parliamentary resources on the Internet, especially in social media, it would be all the more important to also track what is happening on Facebook. I feel that would be an important thing to do.

We know that the incident involving Mr. Toews happened on Twitter—Vikileaks30. I think the same thing could have happened on Facebook. Knowing that, it would be important to see what could be done on Facebook, how it could be done and what we can do to prevent it. That is somewhat the idea behind the original motion put forward by Mr. Del Mastro. It was a matter of checking how government resources were being used.

Something specific was recently in the news. An amendment was proposed in order to take things further, and I think it's a good idea to have a more in-depth look at the use of government resources. We could make the amendment more specific by adding Facebook to it. That's something that should be done if we take that path, as it's clearly the type of thing that could have happened.

I don't understand why my colleagues from across the table did not accept the friendly amendment. We were adding only two words. It is too bad they want to focus on a single issue, the case of the Liberal staffer, Adam Carroll. When we ask to take things further, to conduct a more in-depth and larger study, they refuse right away. That's a bit strange. I would have been very interested in seeing what is happening on Facebook, as that really is also where things happen.

The number of social network users is a hot topic. Facebook has the most users, about 500 million. Twitter has only 100 million users, if I'm not mistaken. The figures have probably changed recently; they're always changing. However, Facebook is a social network that is used even more than Twitter. If we are serious about this, we will also look at what is being done on Facebook.

That being said, I hope we can achieve a consensus. The committee members did not unanimously agree on the friendly amendment. However, I hope we can at least reach a consensus when we vote later today to add Facebook to Mr. Andrews' amendment, which is asking for a more in-depth study on Twitter.

In addition, it is somewhat surprising to see that the Conservatives have not agreed to this, given the Speaker's ruling. I won't get into all the details of the Speaker's ruling right away. I also understand that I cannot add anything more than the two words "and" and "Facebook". That's fairly specific, and I think it's a pity it was not accepted. I am eager to hear my colleagues speak about the friendly amendment I would have liked to pass here. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

On that note, I will see what my colleagues think about my amendment, and I hope that we will find some common ground in order to add that part to Mr. Andrews' amendment.

• (1140)

After we finish discussing this amendment, we can go back to the original amendment proposed by Mr. Andrews. I can't wait to see what my colleagues think about that amendment.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Merci, monsieur Dusseault.

I am now turning to Monsieur Morin on the subamendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Thank you for allowing me to speak, Madam Chair.

As for my colleague Mr. Dusseault's friendly amendment, I agree with it, but I feel that I should play something of a devil's advocate.

I have evidence to present. This is my BlackBerry, which is paid for by taxpayers and has Facebook and Twitter applications. I can use my telephone to access social media. I also have with me at all

times my personal telephone, which is not paid for by taxpayers, but also has Facebook and Twitter applications.

If we pass the amendment and the whole motion, will we be able to distinguish between a tweet that could violate House rules sent from my personal phone—which I think I can use as I like—and a tweet sent from my BlackBerry, paid for by taxpayers?

That's something no one has considered. My intention is not to start a witch hunt on all Facebook statuses that may be problematic. I just want to point out that the issue involves a considerable grey area. In principle, I agree with both the amendment proposed by my colleague Mr. Dusseault and the motion introduced by my colleague Mr. Andrews. However, I think we should take this matter into consideration when voting. Perhaps the issue I just raised will lead to other discussions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Morin.

[*English*]

Mr. Angus, go ahead on the subamendment.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think the subamendment and the amendment are reasonable, but again this goes back to the discussion that we had the other day, where I said—

The Chair: Mr. Angus, if I can interrupt, when there is another subamendment introduced, there is a new speakers list. I keep the speakers list on the original amendment. Because we're now on a different subject, we've been taking speakers as they put their hands up, and Mr. Andrews has his hand up.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I've been waiting patiently, Madam Chair. Could you put him in order of precedence ahead of me? I waive my precedence in his favour.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Angus, go ahead.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will certainly be speaking to this subamendment, which I think is a reasonable amendment to be made.

This goes back to the question I raised with this original motion, which I believe was a spurious motion to begin with. It was, as we said the other day, an attempt to sort of change the channel on the electoral fraud scandal that's rocking the government now, in an attempt to find a way to get on to something else. So when you, Madam Chair, turned us down and said this was not the place at the committee, you made a very wise decision. Unfortunately, the parliamentary secretary decided to ignore that and ignore the very reasonable ruling by the Speaker.

We just need to clarify this so that we understand how this subamendment plays into this. The uncharted waters.... My colleague Mr. Del Mastro, probably without having thought it through, is inadvertently walking our committee one more time down a dead-end road that will leave us looking like a ridiculous committee. So when the Speaker originally ruled on the three issues of privilege—the first issue being the minister's belief that people calling him, outraged about a badly flawed bill, was somehow an abuse of his privilege because it interfered with his staff time—quite clearly the Speaker ruled that was very much not on the table.

• (1145)

The Chair: Mr. Angus, could you deal with the subamendment, the words, and Facebook? Could you make that relevant?

Mr. Charlie Angus: This is what I'm getting to. I understand your desire for us to keep on track, but these are all very much related. It's the cause and effect. When you create laws, you create unintended consequences. My colleague Mr. Del Mastro wants to change the channel on the Conservatives, going back to the old fight with the Liberals. But he has opened a Pandora's box, and our committee is going to have to deal with this. We're going to have to deal with it in a judicious manner.

The second element of the Speaker's ruling had to do with the anonymous video, which was quite rightly moved to the procedure and House affairs committee. Using threats to influence members of Parliament to change their votes is more than breach of our privilege—it goes back to the founding of the parliamentary system.

King Charles lost his head over this. Whether we're in a digital age or whether it was 300 years ago, when the Sergeant-at-Arms had to keep the sword at the door for the Commons, you cannot threaten members of Parliament and tell them they have to change their votes or they have to stop a bill. That's a serious breach. We all agree on that. The breach was that they were going to air the dirty laundry of the minister and his ugly divorce. That's a threat that, quite rightly, went to the procedure and House affairs committee.

Now, the third element, and this is where we're going to get into the issues of House resources, was on this—

The Chair: Mr. Angus, the amendment proposed by Mr. Andrews deals with the House resources, but the amendment proposed by Mr. Dusseault is simply adding the words “and Facebook”. So please come back to that.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm getting there right now. This was our concern about opening this Pandora's box. It is not clear whether they are attacking a former Liberal, House of Commons resources, or anonymous attacks. This is the issue here. Twitter lives in the anonymous realm, and Facebook less so, but Facebook is the use of parliamentary resources.

The House allows us to have Facebook on our apps as well as Twitter, because it is seen as a legitimate form of public relations with our constituents. That is something we use. We use Twitter. We use Facebook. We use cellphones. We use e-mail. These are all legitimate resources.

With Facebook, you can set up a fake page; you can create any number of fake personalities and run a Facebook page. You can do that to attack a member of Parliament. You can do it to undermine

the credibility of a political opponent. Twitter is almost entirely in the realm of anonymous. People set up all kinds of names under Twitter accounts and write all manner of spurious things. I have nothing against Twitter, but I had a gentleman write to me the other day who said he can't call his dog in 140 characters and asked how could he get involved in an intelligent discussion.

It's not our purview to decide whether Twitter is an addition to the parliamentary political discourse or a dumbing down of it. The question has to do with using House resources for new media. We've opened a Pandora's box. Now we're going after House use of Twitter, which has clearly been identified as legitimate. My honourable colleague says it's Facebook, which can be used in the exact same way, and we're now looking at that.

I think people back home are going to get worried about the intrusiveness of government. This goes back to the intrusiveness of Bill C-30, of government deciding to shut down Twitter accounts to be able to investigate. We've all agreed that it has been a very seedy little side story about the minister, with allegations or documents flying about an unsavoury divorce. Now, once again we're forced to discuss it, but that could have been done on Facebook.

This is where we need to really understand where we're going. Political staffers and bureaucrats are online all day. They're using House resources all day. When I'm at my desk, Facebook is often open. We're now talking about the use of House resources in new media.

We've had numerous instances when anonymous sources have been traced back to IP addresses in the House of Commons. Posting online comments, digital troll comments on news sites, changing the appearance of public commentary on a newspaper—all these activities have been traced back to the House of Commons. It would be understood that either a political staffer or a civil servant is hiding his or her name and is trying to undermine someone from another party. That has happened. We know that biographies on Wiki have been changed, and they're traced back to people who have been bombing the Wiki sites. They're traced back to IP addresses in the House of Commons.

We will be in a discussion of the House, going back to the original issue—the issue of anonymous attacks and House resources. What my honourable colleague has done—I don't blame him for trying—is open the door to a whole Pandora's box. If we are going to identify a former Liberal staffer—

• (1150)

The Chair: Mr. Angus—

Mr. Charlie Angus: This is the relevance here. If we're going to make a precedent by going after a former Liberal staffer for his use of House resources on a Twitter account, that would be seen as an unfair partisan witch hunt, unless we are going to actually look at misuse of time. Incidentally, this would actually undo the precedent of the previous Conservative government, which said that political staffers were exempt. People could be posting as digital trolls, bombing Wiki sites, posting anonymous blogs under other names—and we can trace these activities back to House of Commons IP addresses.

I recognize that there is no such thing as a friendly subamendment, but with all due respect to my colleague Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault, who thinks it's strictly about Facebook, I've been thinking for a long time about the whole role of the digital troll in partisan politics. I think we have to carry out a subamendment to the amendment again: Twitter accounts and Facebook and—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Angus; you have to dispose of one subamendment before a second subamendment can be proposed. We need to dispose of this one before we can propose another one.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Okay. I understand that. But I guess what I'm concerned about is that if I'm just limited to Facebook, these other issues....

We have to deal with that in the next round, then?

The Chair: Mr. Angus, once the question has been put on this subamendment and it has been either passed or defeated, when we're back on the amendment and you have the floor again at some point, you can then propose a subamendment to the amendment.

We need to deal with this subamendment before any other subamendments can be proposed.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Well, then, I will....

Again, I think these are relevant issues that will have to be addressed further down so that we're not seeing that this is just an attempt by the Conservatives to change the channel and go on a partisan witch hunt against one poor staffer who's now been fired and the party has apologized for.

I would say that the issue of both Twitter and Facebook would be a fair amendment. Otherwise, we'd be seen to unfairly separate Twitter and its 140 characters versus Facebook. They're both apps that are allowed under the House of Commons; we're not allowed a whole manner of other apps. I'd like my apps on the Montreal Canadiens or the Toronto Maple Leafs, but I can't download it on my cellphone. I can download Facebook.

My wife says I spend way too much time on Facebook. She would prefer it wasn't on my phone. She thinks I have a problem with my obsession with Facebook.

We might have to deal with that at some point in our committee, Madam Chair, but I don't think that's relevant for today.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Further down we'll do another study.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes; we'll do that as a separate study.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: My wife will testify as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus: If we had to go and testify before our wives, Mr. Del Mastro, we would probably be in pretty rough water.

The Chair: Please address your remarks through the chair. Thank you.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I would really not want to involve you in any discussion between me and my wife and Mr. Del Mastro's wife regarding our obsessive use of Facebook. Especially coming home on Saturday morning and going on it before kissing the kids has caused me much grief that I'd like to confess right now. I feel it is something that.... Let that be a warning to all young political staffers out there. Before you move up into the political realm, do not become addicted. I think this is the danger.

Saying that, Madame Chair, I also think it is an issue in terms of the danger, the two-thumbs approach to blowing your political career apart in this realm we live in. Before, you actually had to go and type up a press release and then actually send it out on a fax machine. So usually sober second thought would intervene. I've seen too many people do too many dumb things, and sometimes they don't mean to.

Mr. Del Mastro and I were on a committee last year where people were tweeting in the committee and making comments. Both Mr. Del Mastro and I rose on points of privilege, on the issue that we have to show a certain level of respect to each other. Twitter makes it too easy to throw rocks. I have a deep concern about the rock-throwing ability in Twitter and the anonymity. I share that with Mr. Del Mastro. I do think it is an outrageous world we're living in. But I don't know.... And this is why I guess I go back to the point of Facebook and Twitter.

If don't know if there's a step back from this digital Rubicon that we've crossed. We live in a new world where every morning I wake up and I've got 30 people tweeting me, and some days six of them are sending me hate messages. In a previous world, if they phoned me at home and sent me a hate message on the phone, I could call the parliamentary precinct and say, "Hey, I'm getting phone messages from somebody in Regina who is sending me hate messages". On Twitter, it seems to be a different realm.

But I don't know, having crossed that digital Rubicon, whether that is again the purview of our committee. We have found a situation where we've opened a Pandora's box here and I'm suggesting to my colleagues that we need to be very prudent about this because it does go back to the issues of free speech. It does go back to the issues of open government.

If we are going to go down this road, which I firmly believe is not something we want to do, for the issues of the staffer who lost his job, that's something I feel, or for the minister who's been exposed because of a divorce and what happened to him. But then also it's about the general principle—this is what we're talking about—the general principle that in the digital realm staffers who will be on Twitter and on Facebook will be exposed.

Madame Chair, just before closing, I want to point out how dramatically the world has changed. Last week I was in Rome for the investiture of Cardinal Collins. I saw a Capuchin monk talking on a cellphone in the church, and I was astounded. I looked around me and I saw people twittering during mass, with the Pope sitting 15 feet from us. When I was young, if that happened to me, my mother would have smacked me so hard I would have been out, and the nuns would have smacked me. It would have been game over.

But here I was with all these pilgrims and they were all on Twitter and they were all texting each other that they were there at a mass. I was astounded by that, Madam Chair. I thought this is a whole different world from what we were in five or ten years ago, that the people at St. Peter's Basilica were not living in the moment. They were letting everybody know they were there.

I say, as a former altar boy, that's cool. I admit I took a few quick little video clips myself just to prove I was actually in the building. I think we've crossed the digital Rubicon. I don't think there's a way we can bring this back. I don't think we can put the genie back in the bottle. We don't put the lion back in the cage. It's the world we live in. We are going to be tested as parliamentarians in the coming years very sorely by the growing power of digital media to create campaigns, to intervene, to affect us. So we have to separate that.

This is why the issue of anonymous is a fair separation to go to the procedure and House affairs committee, but the issue of staffers making cracks or releasing information that might embarrass us, I don't think that's the purview. So if we're going to go down there, then I will support my honourable colleague and say that I think we're going to have to look at Facebook too. But I do that under the warning that I think we are going down a dangerous road. I'll leave that until we get to the next round.

• (1155)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Angus.

Mr. Butt.

Mr. Brad Butt: Madam Chair, I would move that we go into—

Mr. Scott Andrews: Point of order.

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews: It's just on the order of the speakers list. I thought Mr. Butt was on the speakers list to the original motion. I'm just trying to figure out how this works. Then when there's a subamendment, you get a speakers list for that. I just overheard you say that with a sub-subamendment, there's a speakers list for that. I raised my hand because I wanted to be on that. I don't know if I saw Mr. Butt raise his hand to be on any of these subamendments.

The Chair: In fact he did.

You're correct that when the subamendment was proposed a new speakers list started. As people raised their hands to speak on the subamendment, the clerk recorded that. Mr. Del Mastro raised his hand but ceded his spot to Mr. Butt, who wished to speak. So the current list is Mr. Butt, Mr. Del Mastro, and Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Butt was in the process of moving a motion.

• (1200)

Mr. Brad Butt: I move that the committee go in camera. I think it will be much more efficient for all of us.

The Chair: I have a point of order from Mr. Angus.

Before I go to that point of order I will remind committee members that a motion to go in camera is not debatable.

Mr. Angus.

Mr. Charlie Angus: I see what's happening here.

The Chair: Is this a point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Yes, it's about the use of going in camera. We were told that this was going to be in public. What we're seeing here is a kangaroo court.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Angus, that's not a point of order; that's a matter of debate. The motion is not debatable.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Andrews.

Mr. Scott Andrews: During a previous committee meeting I asked to discuss, on a point of order, going in camera. I would like to refresh our memories one more time about going in camera at particular committee meetings.

The Chair: Mr. Andrews, that sounds like debate. I have indicated that it's not a debatable motion. If you wish to challenge the ruling of the chair you're free to do that. The motion is not debatable.

We will now go to a vote.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: I call for a recorded division, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: You would like a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>