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Thursday, October 20, 2011

Chair

Mr. Rodney Weston

Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC)): I'll call the meeting to order.

Mr. Kamp, you have the floor.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think all of us as members of Parliament consider it a real honour to be elected to represent our constituents in this place. We know it's an honour, but we come not as lone rangers but as members of this institution, now called the Parliament of Canada, and specifically, as members of the House of Commons. We participate on committees and with that honour comes certain privileges, and with those privileges, I think, some obligations. It appears to me that those privileges have been breached, so I just want to raise this item for the consideration of the committee.

In particular, I refer to a summary of a radio broadcast on October 14 in which there were some discussions about fisheries and oceans issues. It was on the Voice of the Common Man, from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. The summary article has a section in it that concerned me. It refers to an exchange with Mr. Cleary, and the summary says:

Cleary says DFO issued a release this week touting the dollar value of this year's snow crab catch, but he says they make no mention of the stocks, which are in trouble.

And this is the sentence that concerns me. It reads:

He says a report on snow crab stocks, showing that they're in trouble and calling for a review of DFO management, is expected to be released in the next couple of weeks.

I could be mistaken and I'd be happy to be corrected on this, but if that comment is referring to our committee's snow crab report, which at that time had not been tabled—it was only tabled yesterday—it would appear to be a breach of privilege. We all need to be careful. In fact, we were reminded a couple of times in the preparation of the report that this would be the case. I'm not sure Mr. Cleary was here for all of those reminders, but, nevertheless, I think it's incumbent upon us to be aware of our obligations.

So if this does refer to the report that had not been tabled and makes a comment about the content of it—a comment which, by the way, I think is inaccurate, but that notwithstanding—it does appear to be breaching the privilege of the members of this committee.

• (1540)

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Cleary, would you like to make a comment.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): The Voice of the Common Man is a radio station with an open-line show in St. John's, Newfoundland. I'm a former host. It's live radio, and it was a breach. I don't know what to say. I'm getting used to being a member of Parliament, and I'm getting used to sitting on a committee and getting used to the rules of committees. It was live radio and it was in the heat of the moment, and I have no excuse. It was in the heat of the moment. It happened. It came out. I couldn't take it back; it was live radio. It wasn't premeditated. I didn't write a blog post about it. I am a writer.

I apologize to the committee, to the chair. It did happen; it won't happen again.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cleary.

Mr. Kamp.

Mr. Randy Kamp: I thank Mr. Cleary for both the clarification and the apology. Obviously, the rules allow for this committee to issue a report on this, which would make its way through the House of Commons and the Speaker, but I'm satisfied not to take that route, in hearing Mr. Cleary's apology. I certainly recognize the fact that as a new member, it's sometimes difficult to know what we can do and what we can't do. I was hoping to raise this just as a reminder to all of us to be careful about these things, and also to be careful about what we say and when we say it.

I don't speak for all of my colleagues on this, and they may have a different view, but that would be mine.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kamp.

Ms. Davidson.

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Well, when it comes down to the bottom line, I think I agree with what Mr. Kamp has said. I do want to emphasize that the things Mr. Kamp has said are certainly what we need to remember, that it is an honour to be here, that it is a privilege. But that honour and privilege does have obligations attached to it. We were all new once, and it's a learning process. I don't think anybody sitting at this table is going to argue that point.

I think it's incumbent upon the rest of us and on me to speak to the new members on this side and help them if they have questions. And in the same way, you have other colleagues who've been here, and I know they would be glad to help you. It's something we really have to abide by. We try to do good work, work that's not partisan work, at this table. If we can't do our work with the knowledge and the assurance that it's going to be released in the proper way, then I don't think we're going to be able to do the work we should be doing.

I certainly commend you for apologizing. I think that's the proper thing to do.

I think, Mr. Chair, I'm quite satisfied that it doesn't need to go further. Hopefully, there won't be another time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Davidson.

Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the members' comments. I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments and bringing this issue to the committee, rather than perhaps other venues, like raising it in the House, which could very much have been the case. So I certainly appreciate his raising it here. I wasn't aware of it, so I appreciate your bringing it up.

And as you heard from Mr. Cleary, he's new. I remember when I was new, and it is overwhelming. There is a lot to learn and lot to know, especially about protocol, procedures, rules. He's clearly stated his apology and his commitment not to let it happen again.

I know we're working hard on this side of the table to come up to speed on rules and protocol and procedure, and we're committed to that. It is an honour and privilege to sit as a member of this House, and we will strive to work hard and work by the rules, and we

certainly appreciate his bringing this issue up and dealing with it in this fashion.

Thank you very much.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Donnelly.

Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): First of all, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for the way he handled the issue.

I also want to thank Mr. Cleary for being so forthcoming. I was new once, too. It's a while ago, but I still have lots to learn and I can make a mistake, too. When you make a mistake and apologize for it.... Mr. Cleary is probably the keenest and most aggressive member I've seen arrive on the Hill, or one of them, and he certainly wants to do a job. He does not, in my opinion, want to break rules. And I know Mr. Kamp and Ms. Davidson feel that way, and I can assure you that I feel that way too. You have certainly handled it in the proper way.

That's all I have to say, and I hope that's the end of the issue.

The Chair: If there's nothing further on the issue, then I want to thank all members for dealing with this quickly.

Again, Mr. Cleary, I know others have said it, but I want to thank you for your respect and apology to this committee for the situation we were dealing with. I look forward to continuing with the collegial manner in which we generally do business here in this committee. I think this is a good example for other committees as well.

Having said that, we will move on to other business. We'll go back in camera to discuss our work plan, as planned for today.

Thank you.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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