THE STRICKEN WORDS

(Mr. VOLKMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, in light of the previous speaker and the Chair's ruling, I feel it incumbent upon me and the House to hear the words. After all the secret dealings behind the scenes and the dealmaking, which with each new day brings to light more startling revelations, I am still not satisfied with the answers I am getting about this very large and very lucrative book deal our Speaker has negotiated for himself.

Now, more than ever before, the perception of impropriety, not to mention the potential conflict of interest, still exists, and it cannot be ignored. News accounts tell us while the Speaker may have given up the $4.5 million advance, he stands to gain that amount and much more in royalties.

POINTS OF ORDER

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, those words have been stricken from the RECORD. The gentleman from Missouri cannot repeat them.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Missouri suspend for a moment?

Mr. VOLKMER. If anything now, the Speaker himself has grown much more dependent upon how hard his publishers promote his book.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Missouri suspend?

The gentleman from California has made a point that is well taken. Those words have already been ruled out of order.

Does the gentleman wish to proceed in order?

Mr. VOLKMER. Yes. This leads me to the question of exactly who does the Speaker work for? Is it the American people or his New York publishing house?

□ 1210

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, those words have been stricken from the RECORD by a vote of this House. The gentleman under the rules is not allowed to repeat them, and he continues to do so.

Mr. VOLKMER. Further point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is not true. Those words were not spoken by the gentlewoman from Florida. Those words were not spoken, Mr. Speaker, . . .

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I demand that the gentleman's words be taken down.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The gentleman from Missouri will be seated. The Clerk will report the words.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. VOLKMER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the words in which I used the word ''liar'' to the gentleman from California. I regret that, and I apologize to the gentleman from California.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. VOLKMER]?

Mr. THOMAS. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, and I will not object, I appreciate very much the gentleman from Missouri's words. This is the beginning of a new Congress with a new structure. All of us are testing limits. It seems to me what we ought to do is do the people's business, instead of what has been happening for the last half hour. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw any reservation of objection.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, but I make a reservation, Mr. Speaker, to get the attention of the Members of the House and the Speaker's attention.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeking here is a clarification of the original ruling. Members have come to the floor, and they do not understand the ruling that has been made by the Speaker and the broad implications it will have on speech in this institution today and in the future. At the proper point, I would appreciate the Speaker recognizing me so I could pose that question and we could get on with the issues that we are concerned with here today.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry. Mr. Speaker, there is parliamentary confusion. There is deep confusion about the ruling just rendered by the Chair. We have sat here for 10 years while the Speaker has accused this Democratic leadership of being corrupt, and now we find ourselves in a situation in which we cannot even address the issues in which the Speaker is engaged which have raised controversy in this institution and around the country. I would like the Chair to be specific with respect to the ruling which he has just rendered this body.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has stated this a number of times previously, what the position has been. It has been voted on in the House of Representatives that basically through innuendo what appears to be a degradation of the character or personal reference to a Member is not within the decorum of the House of Representatives. So the Chair has ruled and the House has voted.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, a further parliamentary inquiry. Would the Speaker please tell us what was innuendo in the statement that was made by the gentlewoman from Florida?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has already ruled on this. The Clerk has read certain words, and there has been a decision in the House. The Chair's position was sustained. References to personal improprieties are not within the decorum of the House.

Mr. BONIOR. There was no language of impropriety. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where the language of impropriety is that the Speaker cites. What part of the statement refers to the impropriety?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has ruled, it has been voted on, and the Clerk has read those words.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, a further parliamentary inquiry. Would the Speaker do some clarification for me. Under the new rules of the House, have there been any changes that have altered rules that we operated under on 1-minute speeches and special orders 10 years ago in this House?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. No.

Mr. HEFNER. That is a contradiction of what you have ruled, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, a further parliamentary inquiry. Since this entire issue has been disposed of through a majority vote of the House, is it appropriate to get on with the business of the House?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. Speaker, a further parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, while the Chair has ruled, it must now be clear to all Members that the comity of this House and our ability to proceed depends upon an understanding of the Chair's ruling. I would therefore inquire as to what precedents the Chair has relied upon is finding that involved an innuendo.

Clearly there are Members of the institution who recall that Mr. GINGRICH as a Member of this institution came to the floor raising questions about former Speaker Wright's publishing activities. Did therefore the Parliamentarian at any time rule that those inquiries were inappropriate? Can the Chair cite in support of his ruling any instance in the history of this institution when such a similar inquiry about a financial matter, stated upon the facts, in all instances relying upon the truth, was ever inappropriate? Indeed, Mr. Speaker, can the truth ever be inappropriate on the floor of this institution?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A Member alleging it is true does not make it in order.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. Speaker, therefore, is it indeed true that the Chair never ruled Mr. GINGRICH'S comments inappropriate in his inquiries about Mr. Wright's publishing activities and his $12,000 profit?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would state that on June 15, 1988, Speaker pro tempore at that point Tom Foley cautioned all Members to avoid personal references to the conduct of the Speaker and to those who brought charges.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. Speaker, my parliamentary inquiry was this: Was the Member from Georgia's words, Madam President, Mr. GINGRICH's words, ever taken down when he rose on the floor and raised questions about the $12,000 publishing deal of Mr. Wright?

□ 1220

My memory, Mr. Speaker, is those words were never taken down.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The gentleman from New Jersey, as he can imagine, the Speaker pro tempore announced a standard but, did not rule in response to a point of order on that occasion. And more importantly, those words were not challenged at the time.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. Speaker, I believe that my point has been made and that it stands. There has been an inconsistency. The precedents of the House have not been maintained, and the truth has been ruled out of order.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, the Chair has made the ruling that it is not parliamentary language to raise questions by innuendo. May I inquire of the Chair what that means with regard to the right of Members to raise questions about the propriety of the behavior of other Members of this body under either the rules or the statutes of the United States and the House of Representatives?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Personal references to Members are clearly not in order.

Mr. DINGELL. What about questions, though, Mr. Speaker, relative to the propriety of the behavior of Members under the rules of the House of Representatives and the laws of the United States? Are those questions still permitted to be raised under the rules and have the rules of the House been changed with regard to those matters?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will enforce the rules of the House as those demands come forward.

Mr. DINGELL. Well, am I permitted or is another Member of this body permitted to raise questions about the propriety of the behavior of Members of this body under the rules and under the statutes of the United States? Or does the ruling of the Chair preclude Members from raising questions of that kind in appropriate fashion on the floor of this body?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman realizes, there are rules and proper channels for bringing conduct of Members before the House.

Mr. DINGELL. And I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, but that does not respond to my question. I asked, are Members now precluded from raising questions about the behavior of other Members of this body?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It would depend upon whether it was a personality in the debate.

Mr. DINGELL. Have the rules been changed to effect a different order of precedents and dignity to the Speaker? Is he now treated differently than other Members of this body so that questions about propriety of behavior of other Members may be raised but questions about the propriety of the behavior of the Speaker may not now be raised?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Simply put, personalities in regard to all Members should not be part of the debate.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. THOMAS. Under the rules, if a Member, in fact, speaks words that under the rules could be taken down and no one asks that they be taken down, then, in fact, words could have been spoken that would have been taken down but no one asked that they be taken down; is that correct under our rules? Or does the Chair have the prerogative to ask the words be taken down?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does have that prerogative. The Chair does have the prerogative of taking a Member's words down.

Mr. THOMAS. If the Chair does not exercise that right and no Member of the House exercises that right, words indeed may have been spoken that could have been taken down but were not because the proper request was never made; is that correct under our rules?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I have two parliamentary inquiries to pose to the Speaker. The first deals with the concern that the Speaker raised with respect as to how this should be dealt with. The Speaker, as I recall, suggested that this should be dealt with in proper order and in a proper forum. How can we deal with this in the proper forum if we do not have an Ethics Committee, Mr. Speaker, when there is none that has been appointed?

And, second, I would like to ask the Speaker this question: The gentleman who spoke, the distinguished gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LINDER], I believe, made reference to the Vice President in his remarks. Are those remarks with respect to his conduct, the Vice President's, out of order as well?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. References should not be made to the personal conduct of the Vice President.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague, the gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS], made inquiry of the Chair as to whether or not the Chair could rule on a remark that was made by a Member if, indeed, that remark was not taken down and not challenged by another Member. I believe the Chair ruled in the affirmative.

My first parliamentary inquiry is, Is not a Member entitled to know, before he or she is challenged, as to what the rules are of this House before they make any statement?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members can seek advice before they intend to speak on any issue. The rules of the House are clear on this matter.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, obviously, the House is seeking clarification of the rules. The Chair has ruled that he will give rulings only when the Member is challenged. Until we can really find out what is said and what is not said, it is going to be acceptable conduct, forgetting this present subject. My predecessor, Adam Clayton Powell, was voted out of office 25 years ago because of allegations made on this floor. I would like to know what restrictions do I have as a Member that I would know that no one could ever challenge this statement successfully. And the only way I would know is by the Chair clarifying its ruling.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair cannot anticipate all references. The House has ruled on this question. It is pretty clear and evident what the Speaker's decision has been. And it was confirmed.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state it.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, would it be in order for an individual Member such as myself to indicate his agreement with the words just stricken?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has not stated a parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. OBEY. The Chair does not care to answer that.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, this Member believes that the Chair today has demonstrated a very clear inconsistency with respect to the rights of Members of this institution in an unfair and biased way. As such, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. MFUME].

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 152, noes 247, not voting 36, as follows: