

man. If Mr. Gagnon did say about me what this morning's newspapers report, I cannot but think that it was the former Tory minister rather than the present National minister who was speaking. It seems to me that I have always shown myself ready to cooperate with the Quebec Minister of Fisheries, and this incident can only make more difficult the settlement of a question that should be of far greater interest to the fishermen of Quebec than the provocation of a conflict between the dominion government and the Quebec government.

PRIVILEGE—MR. STEVENS

PROCEEDINGS IN BANKING AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE ON THURSDAY, APRIL 1

On the orders of the day:

Hon. H. H. STEVENS (Kootenay East): I rise to a question of privilege. I have been a member of this house for some twenty-six years, and I have always sought to do my duty in the house and on committees as fairly as I can. There are occasions when I have held strong views and supported them as vigorously as I have been able to do, and I do not intend to retreat from that position at any time. In the press this morning is a statement supported by the record of what occurred last night in one of the committees of this house. I shall read the dispatch in the press, and upon that base my protest and question of privilege:

Dunning Hits at "Minority" in Committee
Charges Attempt Being Made to Prevent
Decision on Bill

Then the dispatch quotes the minister as follows:

I protest against the idea evidently dominating this committee that no decision is to be reached. . . . Parliament has the right to dispose of a bill as it will, or make no decision, but it is carrying it rather far to prevent parliament deciding for itself.

The bill referred to was the Central Finance bill, which was referred by this house to the banking and commerce committee on Tuesday the sixteenth day of March. I now direct your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that since that date there have been only eleven effective parliamentary days, and obviously the committee could not sit every day. Furthermore a number of other committees are sitting at this time. It is no argument, in referring to the committee, to say that the session is drawing to a close. This has been a short session, and there is ample time in the future to consider all matters before parliament. I can quote from the record as to exactly what the minister said, to support the

[Mr. Michaud.]

published statement. I quote from the stenographic report of the proceedings of the committee last night:

Mr. Dunning: —

Mr. DUNNING: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there is no report from this committee before the house. I have not the right to quote from the proceedings of a committee, and therefore I presume my hon. friend has not the right.

Mr. STEVENS: I am speaking to a question of privilege. Under the rules of the house the proceedings of a committee cannot be quoted in the house while the matter is still before the committee. That is perfectly true, but on a question of privilege, when the matter has been published and broadcast in the press, I think a member has a right to quote from the record in order to support the accuracy of his statement. I am in the hands of the Speaker.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I believe my hon. friend has the right to deny the accuracy of the report, but I do not think he can quote the proceedings of the committee.

Mr. STEVENS: Well, then, Mr. Speaker, I wish to deny it in these terms: At five different meetings of the committee no quorum was obtained until half an hour after the time for which the committee was called. I and a few others appeared at the hour fixed for the meeting of the committee, and on five different occasions no quorum was in attendance for at least half an hour after the time fixed. That is one thing. In his statement the minister said it was clear by the votes of the committee. I have not the votes of the committee before me, but I have this record in mind: On one occasion it was six to eleven; on another it was five to ten—

Mr. DUNNING: My hon. friend is again quoting from the proceedings of the committee.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member can quote from the proceedings of the committee, because they are not before the house.

Mr. STEVENS: I am not quoting from the records; I am quoting from memory. A third vote was nine to nine, which indicates that it was not a small minority of the committee, but that there was a division of interest.

In the second place, Mr. Speaker, I submit this to you and the hon. members of the house. When this bill was referred to the committee it was with the distinct understanding that the committee would go into the