

Business of Supply

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Chairman, I now come to perhaps the only important part of my long statement. It is only a question of the substance of the costs. I believe there have been general phrases put in different ways, but the accusation seems to be that in some way I am subverting the parliamentary system and turning it into a presidential one. There is curiosity about the use I seem to be making of officials. At times we hear that the officials are wielding too much power and they should be summoned before the House. I recall members opposite urging the government to fire the former deputy minister of finance who was wielding too much power. However, when the same man resigned a few years later, members opposite expressed great concern that the man had been forced to leave by an intolerant government which was not giving him any power. I am not quite sure on what leg they will dance on this particular issue.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I will try to make some general statements on the changing role of the Privy Council office. That is the title of a publication by Mr. Gordon Robertson who was secretary to the cabinet until very recently. There is nothing secret about it. It was a paper presented to the twenty-third annual meeting of the Institute of Public Administrators, in Regina, on September 8, 1971.

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege. I have consulted several more learned authorities on parliamentary procedure than myself on this subject.

An hon. Member: They are all more learned than you.

Mr. Cossitt: I have had it confirmed that the Prime Minister used unparliamentary language in referring to me and my questions in the House as fraudulent. I therefore ask that this remark by the Prime Minister be withdrawn. I think I am within my rights to ask Your Honour to so rule.

The Chairman: I must say I have also been concerned about the remark of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister accused the hon. member of making fraudulent use of statistics. I find it difficult to make a decision as to whether the remark of the Prime Minister really affects the character of the hon. member for Leeds. I have looked at references in Beauchene's to see whether I should ask the Prime Minister to at least modify his assertion. I feel this might be a borderline case, and possibly the Prime Minister could help the Chair and the committee and make a nuance in his assertion.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Chairman, I think I can help you. Perhaps the words were lost, but I am sure they will have been recorded by *Hansard*. I said the hon. member had made a fraudulent use of statistics, but I hoped not intentionally. I think that would cover the difficulty you are facing. I thought perhaps the hon. member—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Graffey: How clever!

Mr. Trudeau: No, it is not very clever, I said it quite earnestly.

[*Mr. Cossitt.*]

[*English*]

I would think it unfortunate if the statistics were intentionally dishonoured in this way by anyone. It is my presumption that the hon. member is acting more out of ignorance than out of ill-will.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1600)

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to be presumptuous enough to lecture the Prime Minister on his responsibilities in the House, but I do suggest he has some responsibility not to aggravate—

An hon. Member: Are you angry?

Mr. Stanfield: Yes, I am angry all right, but I will have an opportunity to speak in a while; I am sorry the Prime Minister will not be present to hear me, but he can read it all. On this point, though, I suggest the Prime Minister might be gracious enough to say that he did not intend to accuse the hon. member for Leeds of intentional fraudulent behaviour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: The Leader of the Opposition seems to suggest that I say words which are the very ones I used. It is for the hon. gentleman to decide whether his members are stupid or dishonest; that is not my task.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baldwin: The point which has been raised, Mr. Chairman, is a very simple issue. The word "fraudulent" has one connotation, and no matter what the Prime Minister might say to skirt around it, he did make that charge against the hon. member for Leeds. The word "fraudulent" has a meaning which we understand. Either the Prime Minister stays with it, and is thereby exposed to Your Honour's ruling, or he changes that word. That is the option open to him. I might just as easily talk about fraudulent conduct in attempting to avoid questions.

Mr. Trudeau: You often have.

Mr. Baldwin: That would be improper and I would not say it. I suggest to the right hon. gentleman he should take this opportunity to see that proceedings in this chamber are conducted on a reasonable plane, and one way to do this would be to change the word that has been used.

The Chairman: I want to be fair to the hon. member for Leeds. I quite understand the point which has been raised by the hon. member for Peace River and by the Leader of the Opposition, but I have to make a ruling on the basis of the Standing Order and the precedents which have been followed.

Citation 154 of Beauchesne's, paragraph (5), says it is not unparliamentary to say that a statement is untrue, but that it is unparliamentary to say it is untrue to the knowledge of the hon. member addressing the House.

From this I move to the explanation given by the Prime Minister. Although he stated that the hon. member for Leeds might have made a fraudulent use of the statistics,