

Inquiries of the Ministry

well advanced and the company had not clearly indicated it was prepared to make all the installations which will be necessary to meet the fisheries standards once that plant is in operation.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I think the minister has deliberately misled the House in his statement.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Carter: I make that charge on the basis of information which has come to me that meetings were held among officials of the minister's department, the refining company, the contractor, the Newfoundland provincial government, the Minister of Finance and various other people involved in the project. These meetings took place on June 7 and June 8, and on June 22 and June 23 the same people met and agreed on all aspects of the requirements of the minister and his department and indicated they were willing to abide by those requirements and would proceed to take the necessary action to correct these problems. I think the minister has deliberately misled the House on this matter.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will, of course, allow the minister to reply, but the hon. member is a member with some experience and knows he cannot charge another member, including a minister, with deliberately misleading the House. Perhaps we might allow the minister to reply and then I will return to the hon. member.

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the hon. member should spring to the defence of the Newfoundland Refining Company when he well knows—

Mr. Horner: Tell us how big a grant your government gave?

Mr. Davis: —that this company has been very slow in making commitments in the direction of pollution abatement.

An hon. Member: This didn't happen when Joey was around.

Mr. Davis: The company has not made available to the government the plans necessary to meet the tough standards we have set, and with which, incidentally, the hon. member undoubtedly agrees.

• (1430)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The point made by the minister and the point made by the hon. member are debate between the minister and the member. This might lead to a full-fledged debate of some kind. I am sure the hon. member for St. John's West appreciates it is a long established practice of the House, as old as the parliamentary institution, that an hon. member cannot suggest that another hon. member has wilfully misled hon. members. I

[Mr. Davis.]

would invite the hon. member to co-operate with the Chair. I suggest it is possible to have debate, to have questions and answers, to have controversy, in other words, to have the system which exists, without accusing other hon. members of having wilfully misled the House or having wilfully misled other members. I would hope the hon. member would find it possible to express his thought in some other way.

Mr. Carter: On the same question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, may I say I am not prepared to withdraw that comment on the basis that the minister and his department were quite aware of the fact that the Newfoundland government, the principal owners of the refinery, the company, the contractors and all the other people concerned were willing to abide by the decision of the minister with regard to requirements and at the meeting of June 22 and June 23 that intention was expressed and the minister's officials were present.

Mr. Speaker: Again that is debate by the hon. member. The hon. member may feel very strongly about this matter and feel he is right, but I believe he has an obligation to the House, to this institution, to respect the traditions and customs of the House, I really do not see how we can help the House of Commons and the traditions of this House by adopting a rigid attitude. It is easy for hon. members to adopt rigid attitudes, whether they are on the government side or on the opposition side. It is much more difficult to bend with the rules. I really think there is an obligation on the part of hon. members, even when they feel strongly about a matter, to take into account the traditions of the institution and forget about the feelings and emotions which are perhaps linked with a situation. I would earnestly invite the hon. member for St. John's West to give some thought to the situation and not place the House in the difficult position in which he is placing us all now.

Mr. Carter: Mr. Speaker, I recognize my responsibility as a member, but I think the Minister of the Environment also has a responsibility not to mislead the Canadian people and the House. I still contend that the minister did mislead the House in his answer.

Mr. Speaker: I think the contention has been made very often in the past that the House has been misled. I have had the feeling over the years during which I have heard debates that hon. members unwittingly, and without wanting to, will mislead other hon. members in the statements and speeches they make. This applies to any hon. member. I am sure that if I had the opportunity to participate in debate as my colleagues have I might be placed in the same situation where unwittingly I would not convey the information I might be expected to convey in the course of statements. But there is a difference. I think the hon. member has the right to accuse the minister of misleading the House, but there is a distinction I might draw that a member cannot say that another member has wilfully misled the House. I think this distinction is an accommodation the hon. member might wish to avail himself of.

Mr. Davis: Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege, one hon. member rose in the House today to say I should have