

have the right to rise and state his views and I certainly will listen to him with the same patience, forbearance and understanding with which I have listened to other hon. members. I gather the hon. member for Calgary Centre wishes to rise on a question of privilege. Perhaps I might be allowed to suggest that it is difficult to have a further question of privilege when we have one already before the House, but with the consent of hon. members we might allow the hon. member for Calgary Centre to indicate what he has in mind.

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Speaker, I think the statement which has been made by the President of the Privy Council does give rise to a question of privilege but so far as I am concerned I would be quite happy, if it would be your desire, to wait until the President of the Privy Council has finished and then raise my question of privilege on what he said. The reason I rise at this moment is that I believe the rules provide that one is supposed to do so immediately. Mr. Speaker, I wait for your direction.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the hon. member for Calgary Centre to indicate his grievance, point of order or question of privilege and then we will try to end the discussion with the last concluding words from the President of the Privy Council. I think we should get on with the other business of the House. I would not try to minimize the importance of this subject but perhaps we have heard most of the points of view and aspects of the situation. The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Speaker, when I asked what I thought was a perfectly innocent question I did not expect I would open the sort of debate on various points which has ensued. However, my point of privilege is that I did not as a matter of fact accuse the Auditor General, as now implied by the President of the Privy Council and I think by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) yesterday, of being in breach of the law.

An hon. Member: Read it.

Mr. Harkness: As recorded at page 541 of *Hansard* I read the relevant section that the President of the Privy Council has just read from the Financial Administration Act which states that the report of the Auditor General shall be laid before the House of Commons by the minister on or before December 31 or, if parliament is not then in session, within 15 days after the commencement of the next ensuing session. Then I asked, since this is the 18th day of the present session, why has this report not been laid before parliament and what excuse if any, is there for this breach of the law?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Speaker, it is quite evident—

An hon. Member: It sure is.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Harkness: —that there has been a breach of the law.

Business of the House

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member should be given an opportunity to complete his remarks.

Mr. Harkness: It is quite evident there has been a breach of the law—

Mr. Trudeau: Say that again.

Mr. Harkness: —but the breach of the law so far as this section is concerned is on the part of the minister. I might say that had I been sure which minister it was I would have asked him the question directly. At one time it was the Minister of Finance. I think now it is the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury), but I do not know. The President of the Treasury Board shakes his head. For that reason and because the Prime Minister is the responsible head of the government I directed the question to him. In any event, so far as this section of the act is concerned I think it is quite clear that the person who is in breach of the law is the minister who I take it now is the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that the hon. member has made his point. I wonder again whether there is any point in pursuing the matter further. The hon. member rose on a question of privilege. He has indicated what his grievance is. It seems to me we should co-operate with one another in an effort to bring this interesting debate to a close.

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Speaker, I have just one more point to make, if I may. I think the minister was in breach of the law not only because he did not place the report before parliament but also, not having been in a position to do so, he should have put before parliament the reasons the report was not presented and then all of this would not have been raised.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harkness: It is because the minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We are obviously debating the issue. We could continue this argument for a long time this afternoon, but I invite hon. members to permit the Chair not only to bring the matter to an end. I will listen to the President of the Privy Council briefly and then indicate what the ruling might be.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I think we have made considerable progress because the hon. member has indicated what he intended—

An hon. Member: What he said. Read it.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I must say that the question of privilege was raised by the hon. member after I had finished reading his question without any further comment or conclusion on my part on it. My point is now—

• (1520)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Again I suggest to hon. members that if this is the kind of House they want we