

Privilege—Mr. Wilson

of privilege. If that is the basis for his question, I would ask the hon. member to conclude in a few sentences so I may rule.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, the basis for the question of privilege is that the answer he gave on Wednesday last is diametrically opposed to those given previously, and I have five different references to make. He is misleading the House, and I think the question is in the context of whether the minister has been deliberately misleading the House. I would like to give specific references apart from those I have just given you.

On October 29, the day after the NEP was announced, we pressed the minister as to his expectations of its impact and he said, as reported at page 4210 of *Hansard*:

—we on this side of the House will not subscribe to the gloom and doom predictions of the hon. member or his colleagues on that side. As far as we are concerned, the energy program which has been put forward is one that is good for the industry, good for the producing provinces, good for the consumer—

And so on. As reported on page 4884 of *Hansard*, in response to my question, he said that the energy program is:

—quite normal and I am quite confident this will work out to the satisfaction of everyone.

Clearly it is not.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is a very logical person and I am sure he realizes he is now debating the question. The minister expresses an opinion that something is going well and the hon. member disagrees. This is obviously a matter of divergence of opinion on a particular government program and does not constitute the basis for a question of privilege. If the hon. member feels that the minister has deliberately misled the House, he has to come forward with that very serious charge and only under those circumstances will I be able to pursue this matter.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, you say I am a very logical person. I am, and my logic was clearly offended on Wednesday last by the minister's response. It was clearly opposite to what he has been saying in this House for six months. It is on that basis that I am putting the question to Your Honour as to whether Your Honour feels that the minister was mistaken or was deliberately misleading the House. That is the question I put to Your Honour. I believe it is supported by the facts.

● (1220)

I have one other reference. It is taken from the speech which the minister made when presenting Bill C-48, the proposed Canada oil and gas act, to the House. He referred to the National Energy Program and said:

We did so with a determination unmatched by any previous federal government, and we believe we have found a solid way in which to build our energy house.

A solid way to build our energy house, and at the same time drilling rigs are leaving the country. The minister tells us that drilling activity will increase, but we know that has turned around. It will decrease. It will decrease further by the end of the year. The minister is now admitting that he knew this

earlier on in October prior to the announcement of the National Energy Program.

How can we as members of this House deliberate on the three pieces of legislation which are before us or are expected to be before us in the next little while? This legislation will have a very serious impact on the energy future of this country. There have clearly been contradictory statements by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. We have to rely on the judgment of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in a number of ways in coming to the conclusions that we as Members of Parliament must come to in considering these pieces of legislation.

In my judgment the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has misled the House. That is clear from the statement he made in answer to me on Wednesday. I have pointed out five different illustrations in statements he has made in the House in the last six months which clearly contradict what he said to me on Wednesday. I say that he has done so at a very crucial time in the development of the energy policy of this country. We are considering this energy policy at a very critical time. The cost to this country is very high. That is why I say this is a serious point for Your Honour to consider.

If Your Honour believes that the allegation I have made today on this question of privilege is well founded, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion to have the matter referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Madam Speaker: I must give the hon. minister a chance to reply.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I will be extremely brief. I think it is quite obvious that this is another in a series of spurious questions of privilege and points of order the official opposition has raised. The official opposition is quite clearly obstructing the work of the House. It has been doing it for days and intends to go on doing it. I think the people of Canada clearly see through this. The allegations of the hon. member are clearly unfounded. His own argument shows that. Every time I was asked about drilling activity I answered using statistics provided by *Oilweek* magazine.

I confess to having misled the hon. member yesterday but, indeed, it was unintentional. In my answer I said that the drilling contractors' association had forecast a decline of 30 per cent in drilling activity this year. I apologize to the hon. member for having misled him. On October 16 the Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors made the declaration that that association expected the use of drilling rigs in Canada to drop to 59 per cent of available capacity over the next 15 months from full utilization in 1980. That was two weeks before the budget and the NEP were introduced. That forecast was made completely independently of the NEP and the budget. So I apologize to the hon. member for having told him that the decline expected by the industry, independently of the NEP,