

Privilege—Mr. Nystrom

reported cash shortage of the government is, in fact, the reason public servants are receiving letters saying they will not get their pay cheques tomorrow?

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the hon. member now realizes the significance of the delay that we had in the passage of the appropriations bill that was only last week before this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: That bill is now before the other place. We trust it will be passed later today and that royal assent will be forthcoming, as this will facilitate various cash outlays to which the hon. member is referring.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LEVEL OF LIGHTING IN CHAMBER—STATEMENT BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before dealing with one or two matters of privilege of which I had notice last week, the hon. member for Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle (Mr. Lefebvre) raised a question regarding an apparent increased intensity of the lighting in the House. In fact, he was correct; we were operating in the first days of this Parliament with a lighting intensity that was about 10 per cent higher than what we had utilized in the last Parliament. We have been experimenting with other light levels, and in fact at the moment we are back to the lighting level of the last Parliament, which I hope members will find more satisfactory.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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PRIVILEGE

MR. NYSTROM—FATTY ACIDS IN FOODS—ALLEGED DENIAL OF INFORMATION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege arises from an answer I received from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) on October 31, as it appears at page 805 of *Hansard*. The question I put regarded a study that was done by the Canadian Dairy Commission on unnatural acids in margarine that are potentially dangerous to people with heart conditions. He responded at that time, as it appears at page 805 of *Hansard*, by saying:

Personally, I would have no objection whatsoever—

He was referring to the release of the brand names, but he did indicate that he had to check on the legal technicalities. He has not released that list of brand names in spite of the fact that legal interpretations I have from a lawyer for the Canadian Press—and I understand the Canadian Dairy Commission feels the same way—would indicate that legally there is no problem in making public the list of brand names of margarine

[Mr. Evans.]

which are potentially dangerous to people with heart conditions.

In the House today I also presented a motion asking the government to make that list of brand names public so that people concerned would not have to be afraid that they may be doing something they should not be doing when consuming margarine. When unanimous consent was asked for that motion it was denied.

One newspaper, namely the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, on Saturday was able to obtain a partial list of the brand names concerned and I have that partial list before me. In spite of the fact that this partial list is now public, the Minister of Agriculture is still denying freedom of information in respect of the complete list, though he suggested he personally thought the House should be provided with it.

I feel that my privileges as a member have been violated because I do not have access to that information which the government has and which the minister has said, as reported at page 805 of *Hansard*, he sees no objection whatsoever to the House having. The lawyers I have checked with told me there are no legal technicalities regarding why we should not have that information. The government has that information and some of it has been leaked to the press, although only a portion of it. The government has still more information, and because of the sloppy way they have handled the issue they are causing needless concern to the Canadian public regarding the types of margarine they are consuming in this country.

If you see that I have a legitimate question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to allow me to move a motion which would require the Minister of Agriculture and the Government of Canada to make public the complete list of margarines in this country that are potentially hazardous to people with heart conditions. I would do that because this is a federally commissioned study that we paid for, the government has the information and they are denying it to the Canadian public.

Mr. Speaker: I see that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) wants to participate and I will certainly give him that opportunity. I would not want that to be taken as an indication that a search for any kind of document at any time by members of the House has been transformed from the present procedure to matters of privilege.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the hon. member's question of privilege—and I really question whether he does have a question of privilege—I want to make it very clear that what I indicated to him in response to his question was that personally I had no reservations but wanted to check the legal technicalities simply because of the fact that the test was based only on one sample of the 95 brands, and that obviously brings into focus a number of questions.

Subsequent to that I checked with the Canadian Dairy Commission and their legal opinion was that there was no problem in releasing the results of the study. I checked with the legal branch of the Department of Agriculture and, indeed, they took the opposite view, that in view of the fact that only