

Privilege—Mr. Whelan

Mr. Whelan: Whether intentionally or otherwise, the hon. member intimated that this was a pleasure trip. We were in Myrtle Beach less than 20 hours. No members of my family were included. There were staff people with me on that trip, and that was all. I say emphatically that as Minister of Agriculture, my duty is to serve this country in the best fashion I know. No one can prove that I used government aircraft to do anything other than serve this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, I feel that the minister has only scratched the surface and given a very distorted view. Therefore, I feel I have a right to make absolutely clear what I said and to ask that he not distort my words in this house. For example, the Minister of Agriculture also went to Miami on February 22 of this year.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Cossitt: I feel that the government is allowing cabinet ministers, particularly the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Transport, and others, to breach the privileges of members of parliament.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As it arises, the question of privilege relates only to comments which were made during the question period. I think the hon. member for Leeds ought to be given equal time, but he ought to confine himself strictly to that point.

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker, I can only conclude by raising a new question of privilege. If it does not pertain to the point raised by the minister, it certainly pertains to a subject which concerns the minister; that is, that this government is allowing cabinet ministers to breach the privileges of parliament by allowing them to take government aircraft and to fly wherever they wish, living it up big at the taxpayers' expense. No one on this side of the House has that right, and we do not want that right, but I would like to know why it is not a breach of the privileges of parliament when this government goes against what is obviously decent practice and allows its ministers to run all over the place, at public expense, on personal holidays. The minister has made 188 trips to Windsor riding and back, at public expense, to visit his constituents. I cannot do that and no one on this side can do it.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Agriculture raised, by way of a question of privilege, whatever dispute he wanted to raise with respect to the insinuations or other effects of the remarks made during the question period by the hon. member for Leeds. The last remarks by the hon. member for Leeds are a repetition of something he said during the question period. It would not be appropriate, now, to carry on and raise that as a new argument, because that was said. If there was any difference or disagreement with it, that might have been

[Mr. Whelan.]

raised at the first instance. In any case, the matter has been raised and contributed to by both sides. It does not, by any stretch of the imagination, constitute a question of privilege, and the matter ought to finish there.

MR. BROADBENT—ANSWER BY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TRADE AND COMMERCE

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise on a question of privilege pertaining to an answer given in the House on Monday by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In the course of a short answer he managed, in my view, to misinform the House very seriously in two important respects.

He was replying to a question by the hon. member for Windsor West concerning developments in the auto industry, which are of concern to Canadians everywhere because we have some 20,000 fewer jobs in the industry than we ought to have. The point and substance of the answer was that Canada was using about 8.9 per cent of the automotive parts actually produced on this continent. I would like to know where the minister got that figure. I interjected at the time and said that it was 12 per cent. The minister carried on with his answer and said, "No, 8.9 per cent".

Subsequently, I checked with the minister's department. An official in his department said he did not know where the minister got his figure, because the department does not have that information. I checked with the Canadian Automotive Parts Association, and it does not have that figure. The figure of 12 per cent which I used is the most recent one. It is for 1975. For a variety of reasons, it is inconceivable to me that the only other figure which might now be available to the minister for 1976 could be anywhere approaching what the minister suggests. As I said, his department suggests that it did not provide the figure. Therefore, I would like to know where the minister got his information, because it is a serious error.

Second, and perhaps even more important in terms of misleading the House, the minister said that, naturally, we in this country would like to see equality of consumption compared with production. He went on to say:

We are having discussions with the major automotive manufacturers today to see whether that can be done.

I checked with General Motors, Chrysler and Ford. All those companies denied that they had any meeting with the minister or planned to have a meeting that day. I checked with another major automotive association to see if it could have been involved in such a meeting and it, too, denied that it was. It seems very strange indeed, because most of the officials in this industry were at a convention on the west coast. I would like to ask the minister either to correct the record, because I think he has seriously misinformed the House, and/or to offer an apology to hon. members of the House.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying about people who use figures and about what figures really mean. I am not going to dispute whether the figure is 8.9 per cent or 12 per cent. The information I have is that we in Canada use 8.9 per cent of the parts manufactured in North America—