

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 10, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. MUNRO (HAMILTON EAST)—REFERENCE TO STATEMENTS IN ONTARIO LEGISLATURE RELATING TO INVESTIGATION OF SEAFARERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a question of privilege resulting from an exchange yesterday in the Ontario legislature which only recently came to my attention. This exchange has serious implications for the proceedings in this House during the last few days and perhaps for later today. The exchange is as follows and began with a question by Stephen Lewis:

May I ask the Solicitor General, in your reported request to the federal government for a royal commission inquiry into the activities of the SIU, would it be possible for you to indicate to the legislature specifically on what grounds you are making the request, the documentation which you are including in your submission, indeed, could you table the submission on which you based the request.

HON. GEORGE KERR: Mr. Speaker, there is some, shall we say, exaggeration to the story that was reported in this morning's *Sun*.

We are not demanding a probe. There is no application to the federal government for a probe. What I said to the reporter actually was said last Tuesday evening and has been said over and over again in this House in respect to questions of the honourable members. The only new information really that I gave that reporter was the fact that we had correspondence from the Ministry of Justice received on Friday from the federal Minister of Justice requesting our reasons for a federal investigation or a federal inquiry and why we felt that the police forces under the Criminal Code cannot, in fact, conduct any necessary inquiry or investigation. I had indicated to that reporter that we would be replying to the Ministry of Justice this week. Really, as far as new information is concerned, I believe that the honourable member for High Park has indicated in his remarks in this House and the information that the police have, and all of which is available to the federal officials, is really the information in total.

● (1410)

STEPHEN LEWIS: May I ask the Solicitor General, since you have now indicated publicly yourself that the inquiry makes good sense, could you, in fact, table the document, the letter . . . whatever it is that you sent to the federal Minister of Justice or Mr. Allmand so that we can see the formal basis on which you seek it.

HON. GEORGE KERR: Well Mr. Speaker, that will be a letter to the Minister of Justice. I believe the letter actually will be going from my Deputy Minister to his Deputy Minister and whether or not it should be tabled, I suppose, should to some extent depend on his opinion in that regard. But, I have no objection to tabling that letter . . .

At this point I am not going to move a motion, Mr. Speaker, but I wish to draw to the attention of the committee and of this House the content of this exchange I have just read, which suggests that members of the House have been basing some of their interventions in this House on misinformation, and apparently, and I believe, this process of misinformation was calculated.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is a total abuse of the rules. There is no question of privilege.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say to the minister through you that at no time have I based any interventions I have taken on this matter on any assumption that the Ontario government had asked for an investigation by the federal government. My understanding is that it is the view of the appropriate minister of the Ontario government that there ought to be an investigation, and that the subject matter is properly the subject matter for investigation by the federal government. I think the exchange in the Ontario legislature read by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) this afternoon confirms that. I just want to make it perfectly clear that I, at least, have not been operating under any misapprehension in that regard.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister gave me notice of his question of privilege and he has spoken to it. I do not think it is proper to have any more than one presentation on any one subject by one member no matter who he may be. If there are others who want to make a contribution to the point I will be glad to hear them now.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise merely to ask the question I am hearing asked all around me. What is the question of privilege on which the minister has risen?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the question of privilege as far as I am concerned arises from the fact that there has been constant reference in the House—

Some hon. Members: Order, order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If there are no other members who wish to contribute I must say that I had the same question in my mind. The hon. minister has made his intervention, of which he gave the Chair notice. As is the custom, it is necessary to hear hon. members fully in the presentation of what they may believe to be a question of privilege, and generally to hear members opposite on somewhat of an equal time sharing basis in order that both viewpoints are represented.

I must say that on two counts I have no difficulty in coming to the decision that there does not, from any understanding I have of the rules of the House, appear to be a prima facie case of privilege. In any event, the minister did not follow his proposed question of privilege with a motion which would require the Chair to make a ruling, so I propose that we could move on with the business of the House.