

*The Address—Mr. Skoberg*

and over clever partisan acts. That statement, put in assertion terms, is libellous or close to it. In other words, I realize the seriousness of making it. Let me tie it into the present situation where the president now sits in judgment on issues that affect the well-being and future of my constituents. I do not in fact trust his fairness and I am shocked at his reputation as a devious partisan.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. Again I must remind the hon. member that he is treading on very slippery ground. I must refer him to May's Parliamentary Practice, the Seventeenth Edition. Let me read him one of the rules governing the contents of speeches, which appears at page 448. It states:

A member, while speaking to a question, may not... reflect upon the conduct of the sovereign or of certain other persons in authority—

In the last sentence of the last part of the hon. member's remarks he has been passing judgment on a person who occupies a position of authority in the public administration, and he also has been reflecting on the character or the integrity of that person. The Chair cannot allow the hon. member to carry on in this manner.

**Mr. Peters:** On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, during the debate on the Address in Reply to the Throne Speech hon. members are allowed a great deal of latitude. The Throne Speech really is of no relevance. It simply provides hon. members with an opportunity to state their positions in terms of their constituencies. I think the hon. member is doing just that, although I would agree with Your Honour if you were to say that he is sticking too closely to his text.

As to whether or not the hon. member is allowed to comment in this manner, it has been the general policy during these debates that if a person refers to the conduct of a department or an agency of government, and that person's background is part of the policy being developed by that agency, considerable latitude has been given. I have in mind the discussions that recently took place in this House, within Your Honour's memory, about the circumstances surrounding the Atomic Energy Commission and its relationship with the deuterium plant in Nova Scotia. This debate took place during the latter part of last session. I would suggest that we have considerable latitude during the debate on the Address in Reply to the Throne Speech and in that respect I do not think the hon. member is necessarily out of order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Perhaps the Chair should remind the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), in respect of the remarks he has just made, that an hon. member may be allowed to make statements or comments on facts, but when those comments go as far as questioning the integrity of a civil servant at a high level, we in this House must consider the specific situation. I am sure the hon. member would agree with me that members of this House would be quite unfair in passing judgment on people in authority in the public administration, because those people do not have an opportunity to come here and defend themselves.

[Mr. Skoberg.]

I think this is a basic principle the Chair must keep in mind. I am still in the position that I cannot accept the argument just made. I waited as long as I thought proper for the hon. member to change the course of his speech and perhaps speak more generally of the actions of the commission or something along that line, but he did not. The Chair had no alternative but to bring him to order.

**Mr. Skoberg:** Mr. Speaker, I was only doing what the president advised me to do at a hearing in Regina. He suggested that Parliament was the place to present my opinions or remarks. I will try to abide by your suggestion in this regard. My brief also said:

We are concerned with the absolute lack of consideration given to the basic ingredients of any nation if that nation is to achieve greatness. Without an efficient rail transportation policy Canada is facing a crisis and I respectfully suggest to this House that if the terms of reference seek only to regulate while failing to establish guidelines for an efficient and national rail transportation policy then this country is doomed to remain static and to failure in the transportation field. As in the government task force on agriculture, which adopted the philosophy that agriculture was doomed in Canada, the president of the Canadian Transportation Commission has adopted the policy that rail passenger traffic is a thing of the past in our nation and from that premise conducts public hearings.

I fail to understand how the commission can investigate itself, particularly if public pronouncements have been made as to the role of passenger trains in Canada by the president himself. For example, the MacPherson commission has recommended that a transportation research agency be set up as a separate advisory body. Its reason for wanting a separate agency was the fear that research carried out within an established authority which also had administrative authority would be used to substantiate decisions that had already been made. This point is well taken. It would not be the first time that governments have initiated special research studies to prove their own infallibility or to justify doing something they intended to do anyway.

I suggest that the commission is doing exactly what the MacPherson commission was worried about, namely, holding public hearings to justify doing something it intended to do anyway. When the railway transport commission was requested by one of the council appearing before the railway costing hearing to explain the criteria applied by the railway transport committee in determining whether a service is a passenger service the commission replied that the train or trains must be designated in public timetables as providing a regular year round service for passengers, and passengers carried on the train or trains must be sufficient in number and be travelling at such times that they could not reasonably be accommodated on alternative service.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but I must remind him that his time has expired.

**Some hon. Members:** Continue.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Is there agreement to allow the hon. member to continue his remarks?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

● (5:40 p.m.)

**Mr. Skoberg:** Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members for allowing me the extra time. I might say, in respect of the remarks I was just making, that in addition to this expla-