

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 9, 1968

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

UNVEILING OF PORTRAIT OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Speaker: As hon. members know, last evening we had the pleasure of hearing some remarks made on the occasion of the unveiling of the portrait of a former prime minister of Canada. Fortunately a verbatim transcript of these proceedings is in existence, and I will take the liberty of suggesting to the house that this transcript be made an appendix to today's *Hansard*. Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Editor's note: For document referred to above, see appendix A.*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the house that a message has been received from the Senate informing this house that the Senate have passed Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation Act, to which the concurrence of this house is desired.

● (2:40 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

MR. FORTIN—ANSWER TO QUESTION ON ORDER PAPER

Mr. André Fortin (Loitbinière): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

I should like to set the record straight, and submit an extremely serious problem to the house. In addition, I base my question of privilege on a principle which strikes me as being of prime importance.

As shown on page 459 of the *House of Commons Debates*, I put on the order paper question No. 123 in which I ask details with regards to the Northern Canada Power Commission, which body is answerable to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien). In the first part

of that question, I asked whether the Northern Canada Power Commission had, within the last three years, bought or nationalized—I said “bought or nationalized” private hydro-electric concerns, and the minister replied: “None”. With regard to the other part, the replay was: “N/A.”

However, on page 20 of the annual report of the Northern Canada Power Commission and subsidiaries, for the fiscal year terminated March 31, 1967, we read the following:

On September 30, 1966, the Northern Canada Power Commission purchased the registered capital of the companies Yukon Telephone Syndicate Limited, Dawson City Water and Power Company Limited and Dawson Electric Light and Power Company Limited. The consolidated balance-sheet which accompanies these observations reveals that the financial situation and the operating statement of the commission and its subsidiaries—

Mr. Speaker, the matter is most serious, since it proves beyond a doubt that the government gave erroneous information to parliament. Without being an expert in parliamentary procedure, I understand that this is completely contrary to the fundamental principles which govern the business of parliament.

When the question period comes, each day, we try to put questions of general interest or urgent questions. We make an effort, on the opposition side, to obtain information which the public asks of us, and with the new procedure which allows the ministers to be absent from the house, the answers we succeed in obtaining are usually very vague. Sometimes one does not get an answer or is told: Put your question on the order paper. That suggestion is followed and inaccurate answers are given.

I therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, that steps be taken immediately by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) with regard to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in order that the officials and some of his ministers stop making fun of some opposition members.

Mr. Speaker: Since the hon. member has not followed up his question of privilege with a motion, it is obvious that no debate is possible. I must therefore rule that there is no question of privilege which can be discussed at this time.