

Tabling of Documents

I want to make it abundantly clear that I impute no motive. Whether from misunderstanding or misapprehension, inadvertence or inadequate briefing, the Minister gave a response which was totally at variance with the facts of the matter on which I raised the question. I believe that a breach of my privilege occurs when a reply or, more accurately, a response contains information which is palpably false. Surely as a Member of the House and an elected representative of my constituents, I have a right to hear the truth, whether it be partial, slanted or skewered, the truth nevertheless.

If you find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has arisen from the response given, then I am prepared to move the appropriate motion. Of course, the point is that the Minister said that negotiations are ongoing in terms of the lock-out, whereas I have information from the local representative and the representative of the *Comité des Syndicats Nationaux* that no negotiations had occurred for over a month.

If you are not prepared to recognize that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege involved in this matter, I would ask you to consider a reference to the Committee on Privileges and Elections on the matter of what measures could be taken or regulations instituted to ensure a modicum of veracity in replies given in this House.

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I believe the misunderstanding is on the part of the Hon. Member. If he reads my answer very carefully as reported on page 15392 of *Hansard* on May 12, 1988, he will note that at no time did I refer to any negotiations taking place by the union. There are negotiations between Expro and my officials taking place on a regular basis. There are negotiations between Expro and the consultants we have hired, Peat Marwick, which are taking place on a regular basis.

The Hon. Member will know that the loan was made to try to protect some 600 jobs and was well before the lock-out took place. I am surprised at the audacity of members of the NDP, who speak out of one side of their mouth about protecting jobs and out of the other side of their mouth about opposing a loan that was made, in effect, to protect the 600 jobs. My answer as stated on May 12 stands.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has raised as a question of privilege an exchange that took place several days ago. I agree with the Hon. Member that this is the first time, for practical purposes, it could be brought before the Chair.

I appreciate the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River (Mr. Parry) having made it very clear at the beginning that he is not imputing any dishonourable motives to the Minister in whatever answer he gave. The difficulty facing the Chair is that it is very difficult for the Chair to know whether an answer is absolutely accurate or to know whether the Hon. Member who is asking the question has interpreted the answer in exactly the way the Minister wished it to be interpreted.

In this case we seem to have an answer given which appears to be at variance with certain facts about which I have no

doubt the Hon. Member for Kenora—Rainy River is absolutely correct, that there had not been any negotiation with the union for a month.

However, of course we accept the word of the Minister who has advised the House, when he refers back to *Hansard*, that he did not intend to refer to negotiations with the union but to other negotiations that were peripheral to the matter.

I think the Minister's comment today may clarify the misunderstanding. Having been on both sides of the House for some years, I understand how difficult it can be sometimes when an answer, often quite unintentionally, does not seem to be in accord with facts that the Member asking the question has at his disposal. However, we have had comments from Speakers in the past that it is extremely difficult for the Speaker to settle matters which amount to a dispute over facts.

I believe the exchange today has indicated that perhaps the Hon. Member who asked the question was quite understandably confused, not intentionally misled but certainly could not understand why the Minister gave the answer he did.

The Minister has made it clear that he was not referring to the union, in any event. The Chair does not like to get into the position of having to settle a question of the accuracy or otherwise of a comment, either in a question or in a reply. Under the circumstances, I think the matter is resolved, at least a little better than it was, and I cannot find a question of privilege.

• (1510)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (A), 1988-89

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting Supplementary Estimates (A) with regard to sums required for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1989 was presented by the Hon. Pat Carney (President of Treasury Board) and read by Mr. Speaker to the House.

[*English*]

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, in order that we can do this all at once, I would move, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 83, seconded by the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell):

That the Supplementary Estimates (A) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1989, laid upon the Table earlier this day, be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?