

*Ministerial Responsibility*

he can. I hesitate to speak for the President of the Privy Council—

**Mr. Clark:** Jack Horner does.

**Mr. Basford:** —but I hope the President of the Privy Council will make his intervention quickly on it.

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first day the President of the Privy Council has been back in the House. He has been very ill. All of us welcome him back.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I am sure his colleagues welcome him back even more fervently than we do. Because of the issues involved and the question of time, I wonder whether the President of the Privy Council might tell us now when he plans to reply. There is a question of considerable urgency involved in this matter. It affects the basic privileges of the House. I think the minister realizes the urgency. Does he have a time he can tell us as to when he will be replying?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. MacEachen:** —may I thank the hon. member for his expression of welcome on my return to the House of Commons. I must say I had an opportunity to observe my colleagues from a distance. I want to assure them that they all appeared to me as statesmen, but of course they know better. I also want to ease my way into the atmosphere of the House by expressing appreciation to the opposition for ensuring that not very much happened in the House of Commons during my absence.

**Mr. Alexander:** It didn't take you long to get back into form.

**Mr. MacEachen:** In reply to the question by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton, I will attempt to reply to this question of privilege just as soon as I have had an opportunity to examine the various aspects of it. I undertake to do it certainly before the end of this week.

**Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It relates to the ruling Your Honour just made which, naturally, all of us on this side of the House are quite happy to accept. I simply want to rise at this point to say that if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would like to seek unanimous consent of the House to make, in this House, the charges which he made against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police outside this House. In the interests of having something happen in this House of Commons which the government House leader just referred to, we on this side would be quite prepared to grant unanimous consent to allow

[Mr. Basford.]

the minister to make the accusations against the Mounties in parliament that he made outside parliament.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## MR. STEVENS—URANIUM CARTEL—REPLY BY MINISTER

**Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to give notice of what I believe is a question of privilege. In reply to a question put by myself to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources today touching on the consumer consequences in Canada of the uranium cartel activities, the minister replied, as far as my notes and recollection are concerned, as follows; "The real question in my mind is whether the hon. member is serving Canadian interests or whether he is acting as an agent of a foreign corporation that is contending with Canadian regulations. We are all aware that the issues which he has been promoting are the issues which Westinghouse of the United States have been promoting."

I would like to give notice that I believe this involves a clear question of privilege. I would like to be able to check *Hansard*, the official record. However, at this point I want to assure all members that I am here to serve primarily the York-Simcoe constituents, and the people of Canada generally.

**Mr. Speaker:** If the hon. member feels he has some basis on which that statement constitutes privilege, I will be interested to hear it. I must say I do not see anything in it initially. However, the hon. member has given notice.

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**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It has some aspects of a question of privilege. Under the rules of the House, I think this deals with the rights and responsibilities of all members. I would refer to two citations in our rules. Standing Order 65(2), which relates to the practice of establishing standing committees provides:

Each of the said committees shall elect a chairman and a vice-chairman at the commencement of every session and, if necessary, during the course of a session.

It is well known that when each session commences, the listing of members on committees takes place within a very short period of time. Then, when references are made, the committees are supposed to be constituted immediately. Standing Order 58(15) makes this clear when it says:

● (1512)

Supplementary estimates shall be referred to a standing committee or committees immediately they are presented in the House. Each such committee shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the same back to the House not later than three sitting days before the final sitting or the last allotted day in the current period.

I raise this matter because we find ourselves in a very difficult situation. A number of miscellaneous estimates were referred to committees on November 9 last. As I understand it, all the standing committees have been established by now, with the exception of one, the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. Two announcements were made in the course of the past two weeks that this