

Privilege—Mr. Hovdebo

debate yesterday on the impossibility of members giving any consideration to estimates that were not before the committee?

Madam Speaker: Yes, I did consider the arguments given yesterday by the hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes). I think the House must understand that I have no way of judging whether there was sufficient time or opportunity to discuss some of the estimates, and I have to comply with the custom that, once the estimates are brought back in the House, they are deemed to have been studied by the committees. I have no judgment on that, but that argument was considered.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. WILSON—NOTICE OF POSSIBLE QUESTION TO BE RAISED

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, I just wish to give notice now that I want to compare answers given to questions which I posed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) today, with answers he has given to similar questions earlier in the session to see whether they are consistent. My recollection is that they are not consistent. At one stage or another the minister has not given us a straight answer, and I wish to review today's *Hansard* with previous issues. Therefore, I am serving notice that I may be raising a question of privilege tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: I take that as notice, but I just want to remind the hon. member that answers which are inconsistent, incomplete or unsatisfactory to a member do not constitute a basis for a question of privilege. I realize the hon. member is not telling me now that will be the basis of his question of privilege, but I do want to caution him that if what I have just stated is the basis for his question of privilege, I can tell him his question may not be very well founded.

MR. HOVDEBO—REPLY OF MR. WHELAN RESPECTING
COMPENSATION TO FARMERS

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Yesterday in this House the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), in reply to my question regarding compensation to farmers for the grain embargo on shipments to the Soviet Union, chose to attack the work of a member of the parliamentary staff.

I believe that this attack on a person who works for all Members of Parliament was both unparliamentary and an abuse of the privileges of all Members of Parliament, for the following reasons. First, this person is unable to answer when his work is publicly disparaged. Second, the high reputation of the institution for which this person works, namely, the research branch of the parliamentary library which serves all Members of Parliament in a non-partisan fashion, has been called into question by the minister's remarks. Third, the reputation of the person in question as a researcher for all members has been unfairly questioned by the minister, who

had not even taken the time to read the study on embargo compensation compiled by the researcher.

For these reasons, I ask that the Minister of Agriculture publicly withdraw his remarks. They are most unfair and debilitating to a person who serves all Members of Parliament in this House.

I ask you now, Madam Speaker, to rule on whether the minister's remarks are an abuse of the privileges of all members of this House. If you so find, I am prepared to move the necessary motion so that this matter can be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

● (1520)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I do not think it will be necessary for the hon. member to put his motion. As I read the minister's answer, I see no question of privilege. If the hon. member feels this was an attack on a civil servant, it was certainly in the most indirect fashion. The minister said:

The figures we used were figures presented by all the different people in the different departments concerned with grain marketing, by compiling all the information available in the grain trade and putting it together in a very thorough manner. When a decision is made, these figures will be tabled.

I do not feel there is any kind of attack in that wording on a civil servant, not even in an indirect way. Therefore, I do not find a question of privilege.

Mr. Hovdebo: Madam Speaker, the answer I was referring to in my question of privilege was the first answer by the Minister of Agriculture, not the second one.

Madam Speaker: I can only repeat what I said. I find no direct attack on officials in that answer. I cannot find a question of privilege.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. DOMM—METRIC SYSTEM OF MEASUREMENT—REPLY OF
MR. OUELLET

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) will want to correct the record as it appears at page 8548 of *Hansard* for March 24. The minister incorrectly advised the people of Canada that they have until 1982 to object to an order in council. I have with me the order in council as it appeared in *The Canada Gazette*. It clearly stated they have until April 29, 1981, to object to the order in council making Canadian units of measurement illegal in Canada. In his answer at page 8548 the minister said:

The answer is no, Madam Speaker. I believe that those who want to express their views have ample time to do so before 1982.

That is incorrect and I am sure the minister, his parliamentary secretary, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) or the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) will want to