

An hon. Member: It is done every day in the House.

Mr. Clark: —in relation to the pursuit of the publication of a document which had been held secret. That was the accusation made by the Prime Minister of Canada. He said that the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland had not made any effort to carry out his responsibility as a minister to have those documents revealed.

Mr. Trudeau: He said that I had covered up.

Mr. Clark: That, in my submission, Madam Speaker, is a question of privilege that is not only a grievous charge because it accuses a Member of Parliament, in his capacity as a Member of Parliament, of failing to carry out parliamentary responsibilities—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: He accused me of covering up, Joe. Answer that.

Mr. Clark: That was a clear charge—but he also extended that charge to include the activities of the hon. member when he was a minister of the Crown.

The hon. member for Durham-Northumberland has just read into the record proof indicating that in fact he did take those actions which the Prime Minister denied he took, that those actions were not successful, not because of a failure to take them but because of a combination of actions taken by a previous administration headed by the present Prime Minister.

The present Prime Minister in the guise of dealing with the question of privilege, although he did not address it, spoke instead of different conventions that might or might not apply to the length of time during which documents will be held confidential. I agree with you, Madam Speaker, that while that is an interesting subject and one in which I will be pleased to join debate at another time, it is not the matter which is at issue here in the question of privilege raised by my colleague from Durham-Northumberland.

His question was, quite narrowly and specifically, that the Prime Minister of Canada had accused the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland of failing to do his duty as a member and as a minister. That was an accusation which the facts do not bear out. The member for Durham-Northumberland did not suggest—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Erik, he needs your help.

Mr. Clark: There is a great deal of shouting on the other side, Madam Speaker, because they do not much like having their Prime Minister caught out in a situation of this kind.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

Mr. Clark: I rise at this point because the Prime Minister, in my judgment, has now compounded what may well be a breach of privilege. He has accused the Member of Parliament for Durham-Northumberland of a failure, which accusation is not correct. When he had the opportunity, he refused to take the simple, gentlemanly course, a course which, when it is respected, makes this Parliament a place where business can be done and progress can be made. He declined to do the courteous thing and admit that he was mistaken and that his charge against the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland was wrongly based.

● (1530)

If the Prime Minister would be courteous enough to stand up and say that he was wrong, that the accusation he made was not founded on the facts, the issue could rest there. If not, Madam Speaker, I think you will find there has been a very serious breach of the privileges of the hon. member for Durham-Northumberland—

Mr. Trudeau: Baloney.

Mr. Clark: —both in his capacity as a private member and as a former minister of the Crown. Because he has been accused of a failure to act in his ministerial capacity when in fact he did everything possible to act, and was frustrated in the success of that attempt by actions taken by the previous Trudeau administration.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I have been standing for the last 15 minutes trying to get recognized so I can speak to this same question of privilege.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cossitt: In fact, I have been trying for an hour.

Madam Speaker: I know the hon. member is asking to be recognized on a point of order.

Mr. Cossitt: No, Madam Speaker, on the same question of privilege we are now dealing with.

Madam Speaker: I am ready to rule on this question of privilege.

Mr. Nielsen: Surely, Madam Speaker, the hon. member has the right to be heard.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cossitt: I have been ignored for three weeks.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Cossitt: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but I want the opportunity to set the record straight.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am disposed to rule on this question of privilege. Before ruling, I want to make a