

As reported at page 6504 of *Hansard* the minister stated:

For the hon. member for York-Simcoe to speak as though we have betrayed the small business community just because some slick player that he may be acquainted with is unable to take advantage, is, I would suggest, an outbreak of hypocrisy that we are all too familiar with around here.

The minister then added:

The fact is that when one speaks of things that are pretty shabby unfortunately in many communities, and in the business community, there are people who can look with sharp-eyed interest at provisions that were not designed for them, take advantage of them and make a big dollar. We have even known, Mr. Chairman, of people who have taken advantage of the banking system to make a fast dollar.

Asked to clarify to whom he referred, the minister stated:

—the hon. member for York-Simcoe and his friends put a bank together under the banking system, made a very comfortable profit out of it and left a lot of other people holding the bag.

The minister's charges are totally unfounded. They reflect on my character, my code of ethics, and ultimately on my posture as a member of parliament. They ought to be withdrawn in their entirety.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, when we review the remarks, it is clear the minister began by very deliberately equating me to a general class of hypocrites and "slick players" out to take advantage of the banking system.

Not content, Mr. Speaker, to merely leave me in the company of "slick players" and "shabby" operators out to "make a fast dollar", the minister went further and stated categorically:

—the hon. member for York-Simcoe and his friends put a bank together under the banking system, made a very comfortable profit out of it and left a lot of other people holding the bag.

In making this statement the minister reflected not only on me but on present members of his own Liberal caucus who were associated with me in the Bank of Western Canada.

Mr. Paproski: Shame on you, Abbott.

Mr. Stevens: Incidentally, I would invite the hon. member to check with colleagues in his own caucus and find out their story of what happened with respect to the Bank of Western Canada.

When the minister was asked to retract his statement—I told the House then, and I repeat now, that I did not make a nickel from the promotion of the Bank of Western Canada—the minister hedged by repeating other unfounded allegations, allegations calculated to smear my reputation in the House and my character in general. He said, as reported at page 6504 of *Hansard*:

What we do know without any question is that a great many innocent shareholders lured into the enterprise by him and his associates lost a great deal of money.

The imputation is very clear, Mr. Speaker. The minister is saying that I may not have made any profit out of the Bank of Western Canada, but that it was still my intention to make a fast buck and leave others holding the bag.

Privilege—Mr. Stevens

I know Your Honour is very knowledgeable on procedural matters in this House so I will not dwell at length on the ample precedents for my question of privilege. In passing, I would like to remind Your Honour that Beauchesne's citation 155(1) at page 130 very clearly considers "the imputation of false or unavowed motives" to a member of parliament as "unparliamentary" conduct. It also makes specific reference to the word "hypocrites" as being unparliamentary. Citations 140(1) and 149(f) also support this question of privilege in that the minister's words reflect on my character in general and my work and reputation in this House.

In closing, may I very briefly put the facts before the House concerning the minister's charges. Fact one, I never at any time made any money from promoting the Bank of Western Canada. In fact I spent \$250,000 of my own money in legal fees and other expenses trying to save it, in trying to reactivate it.

Fact two, there were no "innocent shareholders" who got stuck "holding the bag" as the minister claims. Clarkson and Corporation—who distributed the bank's funds—paid \$14.80 per share to each shareholder on an investment of \$15. That was after they took out \$150,000 in expense money and for the various legal fees. In short, on a \$15 issue investment, all the original shareholders received \$14.80 back. There were 5,200 shareholders. A loss of 20 cents on a \$15 investment is a long way from the manipulated and ripped-off innocents the minister implies were taken in by this venture. On average, the most any shareholder lost from his original investment was \$16. The original shareholders are still shareholders in the bank.

Fact three, I resisted the wind-up of the bank—I did not, as the minister implies, take the money and run. I had sold control of the bank prior to its wind-up but came back in, in an effort to prevent its termination. Subsequently, as the wind-up continued, I attempted to get, first, a Vancouver group, second, a Regina group, and thirdly, a Winnipeg group to take over the bank with a view to reactivating it. All three groups were willing, and in fact in most cases signed agreements, to take over the bank and reactivate it, but they were defeated in each instance by the then minister of finance in Ottawa, who squelched the reactivation of the bank. I would also point out that the Regina group included the Liberal government of the day, headed by Ross Thatcher who was very enthusiastic about the opening of the bank in Regina, but his plans were vetoed by the then minister of finance in Ottawa. If any of those groups had succeeded in reactivating the bank, they agreed to pay a minimum of 50 cents a share to the outstanding shareholders of the bank, which would have meant that on top of \$14.80 which they received in cash they would have actually made a profit of 30 cents a share on the bank in which they had invested. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the shareholders would have received a net profit but for the fact that in each instance the minister of finance of the day refused to co-operate.

If hon. members care, they can look at the present Bank Act and they can see that the Bank of Western Canada is still a scheduled bank. If the Minister of State for Small Business is