

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 29, 1971

The House met at 11 a.m.

PUBLIC WORKS

PETITION FOR PERMANENT CROSSING ACROSS PETIT PASSAGE, BAY OF FUNDY

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the table the sixth report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition of residents of the South Western area of the province of Nova Scotia with respect to the provision of public passage from Tiverton to East Ferry across the Petit Passage, presented on Monday, June 28, 1971, and finds that it meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. HALES—OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM—MISREPRESENTATION CONCERNING PROJECTS IN RIDING

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to rise on a question of privilege. My point of privilege is that I, like many other Members of Parliament, agreed to deliver cheques to the recipients of approved Opportunities for Youth programs in my riding on the basis, first, of the description of the projects as outlined by the Department of the Secretary of State, and also to familiarize myself with the aims and objectives of the programs and, second, to have the opportunity of meeting the people in charge of the programs and possibly lending some assistance.

My point of privilege is that the projects were misrepresented in the descriptions provided as verified by my own investigation. Although the cheques were to cover two projects, I was informed they were indeed for one and the same project. The programs were not checked out by personal inspection by the department, nor to the best of my knowledge was any local organization consulted as to the project's worthiness.

To the best of my knowledge the individuals to whom the cheques were made payable could not be identified as bona fide Canadian university students. As a matter of fact, according to reliable information supplied to me, for which I can obtain proof, one was a United States citizen and listed as a draft dodger.

Your Honour, I am sure, will realize that the two cheques in my possession to the amount of \$5,325, just half the total contribution of \$10,650, should not have been delivered under the misrepresentation that existed and also because of the lack of investigation of the projects. In view of the above I am therefore returning

the cheques to the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) who is responsible for the Opportunities for Youth program.

My point of privilege is the following: First, I was misinformed by the department. Second, I accepted and the department agreed to have me deliver two cheques which covered only one project, not two as described. Third, I as a Member of Parliament was given a cheque to deliver made payable to an American draft dodger, not made payable to a Canadian citizen as was intended by the program.

• (11:10 a.m.)

Upon Your Honour ruling that there is a prima facie breach of privilege or misrepresentation I shall move, seconded by the hon. member for Lambton-Kent (Mr. McCutcheon), that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has given the Chair notice of his intention to raise this matter. Of course the notice did not include all the details he has outlined now for the information of the Chair and the House.

Hon. members are familiar with my views as to parliamentary privilege. They are somewhat restrictive. In this regard I like to found my opinion on the tradition and practice in the British house where parliamentary privilege is seldom invoked to redress grievances of hon. members. I think this is a good practice.

I really think that hon. members sometimes have legitimate grievances or in any event grievances, without qualifying the word, which should be brought to the attention of the House and perhaps studied and considered by appropriate committees without having the matter considered under the guise of breach of parliamentary privilege. I think the matter raised by the hon. member is serious, should concern the hon. member, as it rightly does, and should be of concern to all of us in this chamber. However, I doubt very much whether this kind of grievance should be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections where breaches of parliamentary privileges are normally sent. My thought would be that the hon. member has a legitimate complaint or grievance and there should be some way whereby the matter can be discussed and considered before one of the committees of the House in due course. I bring to the attention of hon. members that we are currently engaged in the budget debate and this might provide an opportunity for hon. members to consider the matter further and to indicate what redress they think there should be to alleviate the difficulties to which the hon. member has referred.

The hon. member has referred to both misrepresentation and breach of privilege. It has to be one or the other.