

Privilege—Mr. Jelinek

offered on the property I certainly do not think is any slander or innuendo, since the Deputy Prime Minister has repeated the words.

Mr. Speaker: I will let the Hon. Member finish. However, perhaps he could make it easier for the Chair. Of course, the Hon. Member can say if he chooses that he did not intend any slander of the Minister's character or conduct. If that is the position of the Hon. Member, then I think, in a case such as this, the Chair should certainly hear it.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, to conclude, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) has just suggested that any allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct must automatically be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. He seems to be saying that any allegation of wrongdoing on the part of a Cabinet Minister has to go before that committee. That would certainly involve an awful lot of work for the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. It seems to me that to suggest that, is in fact to kill effective, fair comment here in the House of Commons about the performance or the actions of Cabinet Ministers. Members of the Opposition should not be inhibited or unable to raise matters of public importance on the grounds that the Government will then take up the time of a committee of the House in exhaustively going over every such statement which is made in the House.

Mr. Jelinek: Over your allegations.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, if members opposite want me to talk about the allegations, then I will. However, Your Honour has tried to discourage that a couple of times. I would point out to the Chair that members opposite seem to be interested in why I referred to this as a speculative and commercial activity. I simply say, and I will be very brief, that a commercial activity is the type of mortgage lending that one would see made as a private business venture. For a person to have made a deal such as the Minister made as a private business person would be legitimate in our society. As I stated before, there is nothing illegal with it. However, a commercial deal is something that appears to be prohibited by the Code of Conduct.

In addition, the question is whether this matter is speculative. That word has also been objected to. Yesterday and today I suggested that when a building is sold for \$325,000 a year ago and is then mortgaged for double that amount the holder of the subordinated mortgage, in this case the Minister, must surely be depending on a speculative increase—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before the Hon. Member closes his remarks, which he is certainly entitled to make, the Chair wants to know this. Does the Hon. Member want to make any statement at all as to whether or not it was the intent, as a consequence of his questions yesterday, to accuse the Minister of some wrong conduct or breach of the code? Surely, in a matter such as this the Chair can at least have that position made clear by the Hon. Member. The allegation that is made now against the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre is that his

questions yesterday carried an innuendo of wrongdoing against the Minister. If that was not the intent of the Hon. Member, then surely the Hon. Member should say so. It would help the Chair a great deal.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that I am a bit confused by your question. I asked the Deputy Prime Minister if actions that appeared to be speculative commercial mortgage lending in this particular case were permitted activities under the code. That was the nature of my question. I do not know how I could have raised the question without—

Mr. Speaker: I will not close the Hon. Member off before he is finished. However, the question the Chair has to decide is with respect to the fact that the Minister has come into the House and has said: "Those questions yesterday carried an innuendo of wrongdoing against me". That is what he is saying. What the Chair wants to know is, because this matter is raised as a question of privilege, did the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre mean to do that? The Chair would be the last to suggest that Members cannot ask questions about the guidelines, or even about transactions. But the question that I have to look at is, did the Hon. Member mean to accuse the Minister of some sort of wrongdoing? I am not talking about illegality in the market-place; I am talking about wrongdoing in relation to the guidelines. I invite the Hon. Member to help me a little bit in responding to that specific question since that is what I have to decide.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, I think the simple answer I can give to you is that I was seeking to get information about a matter which I think is an important matter. If, in fact, it was the response of the Government House Leader that this was not a violation of the code, then of course my attention would turn to the code which would permit activity that a common sense judgment might deem unacceptable for Cabinet Ministers. But I was seeking that information because this is an important issue concerning public policy.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank Hon. Members for their interventions. The Hon. Member for Churchill was very helpful. Obviously, the Chair will reserve on this matter and examine *Hansard* very carefully.

I think that the Chair ought to observe, as I have observed in the past, that once upon a time in the mists of history one could say anything in the House of Commons but not outside it. One could say anything because it was in the public interest that the ordinary laws of defamation did not apply to members when they were in their place speaking on public matters. I remind all Hon. Members that that was history. That was yester-year, yester-century, if there is such a word. Today, anything said in here is immediately said outside.

I will, of course, consider carefully all of the arguments. But I do ask Hon. Members to take this into consideration. Arguing about it for hours later does not get away from the fact that I think one ought to be more careful in this Chamber than once was the case. I am not setting that down as a rule. I