

unanimously passed the second report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, he would present expanded terms of reference to that committee so as to reactivate the subcommittee on penitentiaries and permit it to travel to the major institutions in the country in an effort to head off what is shaping up to be a major series of disturbances in the system again. He said that he would take the matter up with the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) as to what the next step ought to be.

Could the House leader now inform the House whether he has reached a conclusion to bring in expanded terms of reference in the interest of peace within the system?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, there may be a misunderstanding between the hon. member and myself. I had assumed that the matter had been attended to or was capable of resolution under the report that had been submitted by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. If I am mistaken in that which was my understanding, I will review the matter again.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain to the minister that the second report was unanimously concurred in by the House and that it called for an expansion of the terms of reference so that the subcommittee could be reactivated. This is what I am asking about.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. MCKINNON—VARIANCE IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: There is another unfinished matter of privilege before the House on which we reserved the right of the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon) to make a contribution.

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on that question of privilege which I raised last Wednesday concerning conflicting answers which I received to questions in the House. At that time the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Danson) made a short reply and you, sir, gave the minister additional time to prepare a contribution on this question. Later that day I advised the Clerk of the House that I would not be here last Thursday or Friday, but would be here on Monday, February 19, and days following. I was rather surprised on my return on Saturday to learn that the minister had seen fit to ignore the usual courtesy and had risen in his place and delivered his reply in my absence on Thursday last. The bright side is that I have had ample time to read his reply carefully.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker I had hoped that the minister might be able to clarify the situation, perhaps by stating that one of the replies had been an honest mistake. Instead, he chose to muddy the situation by quoting a plethora of selected dates about extraneous happenings which had little to do with the central issue.

Privilege—Mr. McKinnon

That issue can be encapsulated into a very few words. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said on November 14 that Chancellor Schmidt and others in mid-July had asked for a few more months and that the government felt it would be willing to give them a few more months. The minister said in *Hansard* at page 867 on November 7, 1978:

The vendors asked for additional time to submit.

It should be noted that both of these remarks were made in November, some four months after Chancellor Schmidt asked for an extension and, incidentally, if we accept the minister's reply of last Thursday, we must believe that Chancellor Schmidt was asking for this indulgence two weeks after it was granted—a most unlikely happening.

Now we get the opposite answer. The question was on the order paper and asked:

Did Chancellor Schmidt personally or some of the other bidders ask for a few more months beyond the August 1 deadline?

The answer was no. I have avoided, in the interests of simplicity, mentioning all the other doubts and questions raised by the rambling dissertation of the minister last Thursday. My case remains the same now as then. Wherein does the truth lie? Did Chancellor Schmidt ask for and receive a few more months, question No. 1, or did he not, which is question No. 2?

The likelihood of his asking for additional time in July, which he had already been granted in June, and such time to last for only two weeks, as posited by the minister in his reply, cannot be taken seriously. I presume, sir, that you will consider the question of privilege as seriously as I do, noting that the minister did not deny any of the statements. If you decide there is a prima facie case, I will be prepared to move the motion I read last Wednesday.

● (1530)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Over the period of time this question has endured before the House, I have heard the hon. member twice, I think, so I believe I should hear the minister a second time and then make a decision.

It seems to me, before finalizing the matter, that the question I have to decide is a simple one. The hon. member has cited two answers which he says are in conflict with each other. The question that I have to decide, therefore, is whether one of those answers was a misleading answer, and, if so, whether it was a deliberately misleading answer. Those are the two questions I have to decide.

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the lengthy preamble of the hon. member with reference to his absence from the House. I thought I explained that with the courtesy which I think one member should show to another in this House. I think that courtesy should be mutual.

I had not been made aware that the hon. member would not be present. Indeed, I made a commitment to his House leader, so I suggest that they should get together. Obviously on that