

Oral Questions

June 30, 1978, where Judge Thurlow established a precedent on which a decision is made on the residency requirements in the contents of the Citizenship Act. As far as the income tax return is concerned, that question should be addressed to the Minister responsible for Revenue Canada.

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MEDICAL CARE

POLICY STATEMENT BY ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY LEADER

Mr. Gordon Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Last week the Leader of the Liberal Party in Ontario, the Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in Ontario, publicly repudiated the policies of the federal Minister of National Health and Welfare in the matter of extra billing. He said it was a matter of practising brinkmanship and he disagreed fundamentally with that. In the interest of securing good, sound medical coverage for all Canadians, will the Prime Minister consider instructing the Minister of National Health and Welfare to cease this brinkmanship and undertake good sound negotiating practices with the Provinces?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I can say nothing about the Liberal Leader of Ontario, but I can say that I support the Minister of National Health and Welfare one hundred per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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BILINGUALISM

POLICY OF ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY

Mr. Gordon Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Madam Speaker, that does not help clear up the division in the thinking of the Liberal Party in this matter, which I might say also includes the policy on bilingualism. Will the Prime Minister enunciate for what outspoken remaining Liberals there are in Ontario, so they will know what to believe going into the next election, whether the Liberal Party of Ontario speaks for the bilingualism policy and medicare policy, or whether it is the Government of Canada?

● (1500)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, when the Leader of the Official Opposition has straightened out Mr. Davis on this matter, I will undertake to talk to Mr. Peterson.

PETITION

MR. DEANS—EXTENSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Petition presented by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) on October 11 does not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. DOMM—ACTIONS OF METRIC COMMISSION—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: I would now like to rule on the question of privilege which was raised in the House by the Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm) on October 4, 1983. I have, of course, carefully examined the documents supplied to me by the Hon. Member.

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: While I am making a ruling, there cannot be a point of order.

Mr. McGrath: Hon. Members should sit down.

Madam Speaker: I know they should. Thank you very much. I usually look around me in a very cross manner so that all Hon. Members will understand that I would like them to listen to me, but it is hard to be cross now. The House is very silent. Thank you very much.

I have examined all of those documents and of course listened to the presentation made by the Hon. Member for Peterborough and by other Hon. Members who expressed themselves on this particular question. I have also taken note of the citations from Beauchesne and Erskine May which were quoted in the submissions of Hon. Members. Nobody, of course, questions their validity as part of the traditional interpretation of the application of privilege. That is, of course, what the interventions were all about.

It is very clear, of course, that an act or omission which obstructs or impedes the House or its Members in the discharge of their functions would constitute a breach of privilege or contempt. The Hon. Member for Peterborough claims that the letter concerned has had precisely this effect, and this is the issue on which the Chair must base a *prima facie* judgment.

The House has a long and honourable tradition of protecting the freedom of speech, not only of its own Members but of all the citizens of this country. The Hon. Member himself emphasized that he was not questioning a private citizen's freedom of speech, but freedom of speech, if it is to mean anything at all, must allow for the use of strong and even offensive language. Comments may be made which are unjust, inaccurate or even outrageous. If we believe in the right of comment, we must allow it even when it is mistaken, misguided or impulsive.