

Ministerial Conduct

on a question of privilege, then let him make it on a question of privilege. Then, after hearing it, if Your Honour says there is no question of privilege involved, that is up to you. But I think that is the way we should proceed; and I too am only trying to help the Chair.

Hon. Maurice Lamontagne (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I had no prepared statement this morning. I have one now and I think I should be allowed to make that statement because of what has been said this morning.

Mr. Speaker: We are playing with words. I am sure the Secretary of State (Mr. Lamontagne) wishes to present his views to the Chair, and the use of the word "statement" is a difficulty between French and English, if I understand him properly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lamontagne: Mr. Speaker, a few years ago when my Ottawa home burnt down, several pieces of furniture were destroyed. The cost of damage was high, since my insurance had expired without my knowledge, due to the death of my insurance agent. At that time, I had to refurnish my home in part on a temporary basis.

In the spring of 1962, before my daughter's wedding, I decided that I could no longer delay buying new furniture. I then bought furniture on credit from the Futurama store, a well known Montreal firm. There was never any question of a gift. I received statements of account and, besides, my account was normally transferred by the company, like all other outstanding accounts, to the Bank of Montreal in early January 1964.

I must also point out that at the time, I was a private citizen and not yet a member of parliament, and that my salary was \$12,000, rather than \$27,000, as suggested by a journalist.

After my election, I certainly would have been able to settle this account, but early in May 1963, a member of my family had to retire from active life for reasons of ill health and asked me to lend him \$3,000 to help build a small home. I felt unable to refuse him this service, but this meant that I would have to postpone starting to pay my debt.

In December 1963, I made a second purchase of furniture for the apartment I have in my riding, and I intended to pay for it without delay at the time. However, I did not have this opportunity, as I received the first statement about January 21, when all the company's accounts had already been taken

over by the Bank of Montreal. The bank got in touch with me at the time. I proposed an arrangement which was immediately accepted, and I now have repaid about half my liability.

I wish to add that I did not take part directly or indirectly in any fraudulent activities. Moreover, the Sefkind brothers and their companies did not get any favour from the government through my intervention. More particularly, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Deschatelets) informs me that an investigation has revealed that his department did not get any offer for sale, by tender or otherwise, and that it did not buy anything from the Sefkind brothers or their companies since April 1963.

I do not intend at this stage to comment on the false rumours and slanderous comments that can be heard in the halls of parliament or read in the newspapers about that incident. Before resuming my seat, I would like to give some advice to all hon. members of the house.

Should you want to buy furniture, pay cash. Should you buy on terms and should your supplier go bankrupt later on, you and your family would go through very unpleasant moments, especially if you feel you have made some sacrifices to remain in public life.

Hon. René Tremblay (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity afforded me to lay before the house the facts about the furniture I bought from the Futurama Company Inc., Montreal, in order that you may rule on the merits of the motion for adjournment.

In order to complete the furnishing of my new house, in the summer of 1963, I went to Montreal with my wife to the show room of the Futurama Company, a firm which is known for the high quality of its furniture, which had been in business for more than 20 years and where many prominent people from Quebec city and Montreal went regularly to make their purchases.

The first delivery of furniture was made on November 15, 1963, the second, on November 28, 1963, the third, on December 19, 1963 and the fourth on January 10, 1964.

After the above deliveries, there were still a few more pieces of furniture to come.

It was on February 19 that the manager of the Bank of Montreal advised me of the bankruptcy of the Futurama Company and of my account, as of that date, with that company.

Six days later, on February 25, 1964, I sent to the manager of the Bank of Montreal a cheque in the amount of \$3,341.69, and on