

Summer Recess

above the law. But equally no one in this country is guilty until proven guilty, and that includes individuals as well as companies.

● (1740)

I wonder if anyone here would like to say that the six companies are guilty. Have hon. members opposite already set up their kangaroo court? Are they doing, in the House of Commons, what the courts of the land are supposed to do? Have we lost our concept of British justice? Have we presumed, by innuendo and already come to the conclusion that everyone attached to this cartel, to this alleged illegality, this alleged price-fixing in the domestic market, is guilty? Are we at least going to have the decency to wait until the courts prove their guilt? It seems to me that this is a fundamental concept for parliamentarians. Have we lost that concept, safe in the security of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) who quite often enjoys the immunity which members of Parliament are granted?

This immunity is abused by the opposition's innuendo's from time to time, when it talks about Mr. Austin—senator and deputy minister—being guilty of doing something wrong because he set up a cartel which was perfectly legal under the laws of the country, provided its impact was in the international markets. Mr. Austin left that department in 1974.

Incidentally, in 1970, when this was set up, the province of Ontario had a vested interest in its success. It was not in the market to buy uranium, but it too was concerned about what was happening in Elliot Lake. It was concerned about the social impact of the American policy on the lives of thousands of decent Canadians from Ontario who lived in Elliot Lake. When it eventually needed uranium, and when, as the hon. member said, it paid an abnormally high price, by certain standards, the hon. gentleman thought enough to say it was not strictly as a result of the cartel, because we all know that around that time uranium prices rose dramatically throughout the whole world.

The fact is that this issue is before the courts. No amount of alleged finagling or any kind of influence prevented the appropriate agency from investigating the charge of the illegality of price-rigging by certain companies in this country. The agency, after four years of investigation, feels there is a *prima facie* case. The recommendations of that agency to the Minister of Justice are very simple. And I am not a lawyer. It recommended that charges against these six particular companies proceed before the courts. I think there are six companies.

The Minister of Justice has not deviated from that recommendation. Imagine what would occur if he had deviated. Imagine the feigned anger of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona if we removed Mr. Brown and substituted another lawyer, called Mr. White! Imagine what he would say, "Oh, they do not want that lawyer with the great knowledge which he has acquired over four years to have any input. He knows too much as a result of going through papers for four years. Let us get rid of him and get some Liberal hack to replace him." So, how can the Minister of Justice win? The Minister

of Justice is an intelligent politician, and a good and honest man.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: If the minister had appointed—reappointed, if you like—a lawyer named Brown, whom I am defending, though I never met him, I think it is because he believes in the quality of law in this country. He believes in the qualifications of lawyers. He did not, as the hon. member did, phone some of his friends in Ontario. I will just quote, because I do not think it is worth spending too much time on it. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona phoned his friends in Ontario and he claims they never heard of Mr. Brown. Some of them never heard of Mr. Kilgour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Time!

Mr. Mackasey: I have to say that I am at a disadvantage when I have to refute some of the arguments of my friend from St. John's East when he talks about the heat and the scandal. I say, what heat? It is certainly not from the question period. It is certainly not from the quality of debate. What heat is on the government? Really, the case is in court. What scandal?

I challenge anyone in the opposition to stand up and accuse Jack Austin of impropriety, or any other individual, or any member of the cabinet. The opposition can do it. It has parliamentary immunity. If hon. members want to prejudge the courts, go ahead. They are the eminent lawyers, and I am only a layman. They can tell the courts they do not have to go to the courts with this problem. They will prejudge it in the question period. They will prejudge it in the House of Commons. They will make speeches with enough innuendo and enough inference that it will make the right headlines, and after two or three days it will not be alleged impropriety—it will be improper conduct.

I may appear flippant about the subject, but in conclusion, I have always been concerned that when we review the rules of the House of Commons that we try to find a medium, some happy note. Those people whose names are dropped a little loosely in this House deserve some way of redress. In some way, we must learn not to abuse one of our parliamentary privileges.

We all know the history of how this happened, the immunity we have and the immunity we need if we are going to do our job. I am used to debate; however, it seems to me that in the 20 years I have been here too many people have been slurred, vilified, condemned, ridiculed, and tainted by innuendo, to leave me totally easy with the system. It makes us immune and above the law when we resort to that practice.

I come back to the young man I knew in the sixties, called Guy Lord, and a total stranger, because months later his father sent me a letter, thankful that someone got up in the House of Commons. "Perhaps the hon. gentleman, perhaps that lawyer, is not guilty. What happens?" I remember that