

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 21, 1970

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. DINSDALE—LETTER RESPECTING NATIONAL PARKS TABLED BY MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Yesterday afternoon the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development tabled a letter bearing my signature. I was out of the House attending a meeting with the chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission, the Hon. Jack Pickersgill, in the company of the Premier of Manitoba, the Manitoba Minister of Industry and Commerce and the mayor of Brandon.

An hon. Member: What a group!

Mr. Dinsdale: The meeting was convened to discuss ways and means for continuing the present class one air service into western Manitoba which has been threatened by Transair's application to suspend the service. Because of the implications of the proposed change in regional air policy for continuing economic progress in western Manitoba, I think you will agree that the meeting had top priority. This, then, is the first opportunity I have had to deal with the minister's action.

The issue raised in the House yesterday brings into focus the whole question of leaseholds in western national parks. It is also closely tied in to the feeling of isolation and alienation that is growing to an alarming degree in western and northwestern Canada, as has been pointed out recently in press articles. The government has demonstrated a congenital incapacity to deal with the serious special problems in these important areas of Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the hon. gentleman immediately to remind him that he has the floor now under very special rules and the requirement at this time is that he should indicate how his privileges as a member of this House have been violated by the tabling of the letter to which

he alludes in the notice he has given me. If he will indicate in what way he thinks there has been a breach of privilege, then further action might be contemplated. Certainly this is not the time to discuss the general policy which is perhaps the background of the tabling of the letter yesterday by the minister.

Mr. Dinsdale: I accept your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I merely made that reference because the problem is peculiar to the west inasmuch as there are no national parks in Quebec and only minor ones in Ontario. In tabling the letter the minister implied that it endorsed a policy that the Liberal government has been pursuing in respect of western national parks since 1963.

My question of privilege revolves around two fundamental matters: first, the right of the minister to table a letter signed by another Privy Councillor without first seeking the customary permission from the author and, second, the ethics of using this kind of cheap politics to stir up further trouble in the west.

The letter, of course, in no way endorses what the minister is attempting to do in the western parks today. It merely outlines the orderly plan that was adopted in 1962 for the development of national parks in western Canada based on the principles of wise management and multi-use that emerged out of the Resources for Tomorrow Conference in 1961. It carefully preserves the right of perpetuity in the original leases.

● (2:10 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, the letter was tabled. It is now the property of the House. It was tabled without my permission, and I do not think hon. members will have the opportunity of perusing it unless they make special efforts to do so.

The implication was left by the minister that it endorses his policy. I shall be as brief as I can on this fundamental point. It does not endorse that policy because the minister has arbitrarily cancelled perpetuity in original leases. The issue was taken to the Exchequer Court by the residents of the western parks and their position was upheld by that court. The minister has now referred the matter to