

Hansard—Altering of Report

answer as to exactly what the effect of the application of the plan has been on the consumption of butter.

I only say that because in my speech the other day it will be found that I said, when discussing the matter here, that one of our objectives was to find that out, and these records which I am reviewing now do not make it possible to find that out. I do not know whether members are interested in hearing the law as it is in Quebec. I have the sections of the act here. It is probably not necessary to read them to the house. Maybe I should read them. I think it would be just as well to read them. It is not our law, it is the law of the province of Quebec, and it is not our responsibility to enforce the law.

Mr. Coldwell: Mr. Speaker, may I remind the Minister of Agriculture that neither the figures he gave last Friday nor the law of Quebec are in question in the house at the present time.

Mr. Gardiner: They may not be in question in the house—

Mr. Coldwell: Or in the country.

Mr. Gardiner: —But I gave an absolute undertaking both to the Speaker and to the press that I would give the figures today and give an explanation of what they mean.

An hon. Member: Why?

Mr. Gardiner: Of course, if no one wants to have the right information—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If I may comment at this time, the minister is quite right in raising a question of privilege in order to deal with the particular matter at issue, namely the alteration of *Hansard*. I was waiting to see if hon. members would raise a point with respect to the additional matter the minister has been dealing with in the last few minutes. If the point is raised at this moment the minister should not go any further than necessary in order to explain his question of privilege. Whatever else has to be done with respect to the matter of butter and margarine will have to be dealt with when we resume the discussion in committee of supply.

Mr. Gardiner: That is quite all right. That is why I asked the question whether the house wanted to hear it, and that is the answer. Finally, all I have to say is that the government has nothing to do with the distribution of margarine, spreads or other fats in the province of Quebec and only seeks information there as well as in other provinces for the purpose of being able to determine whether the policy is having any effect upon the consumption of butter, and, if so,

how much. There is nothing in our records to indicate anything being done by any institutions in Quebec or elsewhere which is illegal, nothing whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: As another person who is involved in the circumstances surrounding this case I should make my position clear. The right hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) came to me last Friday a few minutes prior to six o'clock with respect to an alteration which he wanted to have made in *Hansard*. As hon. members know, at that moment I had as guests in my chamber two members of parliament from New Zealand whom several hon. members had met between five and six o'clock.

When the minister came to me I understood, and I am sure the minister, who has not perhaps put the emphasis on that particular phase of our conversation but rather on the other, which is the inference that whatever he had said might have indicated that the institutions in Quebec were violating the law. I want to say that I was not so much concerned with that, because having said that, that was not the main reason I thought his request was reasonable.

He was dealing with figures and in front of the two guests who were there he indicated that there was very little time left and for the purpose of accuracy certain figures had to be changed and others taken out of the record. I took it as a minor essential alteration; that is the way it struck me. We were in committee of supply where more latitude is allowed than when the Speaker is in the chair for the revision of questions asked and answers given.

I want to say too that I was further impressed, although that was not the motive of my decision, by the fact that something had been said which might create considerable implications with respect to institutions in my province. As I say, that was not the main reason why I made the decision. I thought I was perfectly within what I considered to be the guiding rule with respect to alterations made in *Hansard*, and I shall deal with this later.

There is another thing which was in my mind. These were the very last minutes before six o'clock on Friday and I was fortified by the fact that if by any chance I was erring the possibility of redressing the situation could always be found. The daily edition of *Hansard* is the unrevised edition. We all know that within eight days from the moment speeches are made there is a revised edition prepared. Therefore we can always check whatever has been said and reinsert whatever has been taken out if it