

includes thousands of automotive workers, I think this question of privilege should be allowed. My Leader, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), should be allowed to move the appropriate motion.

• (1520)

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as I understand the question of privilege, it arises out of an alleged contradiction in the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Trade (Mr. McDermid) on June 17, wherein he stated:

This Government has not requested that the Auto Pact be on the table for negotiation. To date, neither has the American side requested that it be part of the negotiations.

I am having a little difficulty piecing this together, Mr. Speaker, but as nearly as I can figure it out, I understand the issue to be that there is an alleged contradiction between the statement of the Parliamentary Secretary and a statement in a memo by a U.S. congressional staff member "who was part of a group briefed earlier this month by Deputy U.S. Trade Negotiator Phil Murphy". I could comment at length, Mr. Speaker, as to how excited we should get about just exactly where this congressional staff member is in the scheme of things, but I do not think I need do that.

The question of privilege fails on two grounds. First of all, you have already ruled on this when you ruled earlier today that there should not be an emergency debate on this matter. Failing that, I refer you to precedent.

There are several decisions and much commentary on what is a question of privilege. I refer you to the decision of Mr. Speaker Lamoureux of March 21, 1974, in relation to a claim that contradictory statements had been made by a Minister in the House, in committee, and in letters.

The issue in that case was whether or not allegedly contradictory statements of a Minister constituted sufficient cause to raise a question of privilege. The Speaker found at that time that there was not a *prima facie* case of privilege. I quote from the decision:

The Speaker has no other responsibility than determining whether there is a *prima facie* question of privilege which later on could be submitted to the House in the form of a motion.

He went on to say that while the Hon. Member may have a grievance against the Minister, there are more appropriate avenues available, either in the House or in committee.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that if the House were to set aside time for debate every time there is a contradictory statement between Members of this House, or between Members of this House and other Canadians, and even other congressional staff members, all we would be doing would be examining contradictory statements.

I suggest that the question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, fails on two grounds: first, that you have already ruled on it in ruling

out an emergency debate on the subject; and second, that it is a matter of contradictory statements, something which has been ruled in the past, by Mr. Speaker Lamoureux and others, as not being appropriate for a question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), in reply.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, just one brief comment in reply. The contradiction in this case is a contradiction within the Government itself, between the Parliamentary Secretary, whose statement last week indicated one thing, and the Minister, whose statement on March 16 said quite a different thing. That kind of a contradiction within the Government itself is something which has not been addressed by the Deputy House Leader.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I perhaps should have read more completely the case to which I referred.

Rising on a question of privilege, Mr. Caouette, the Member for Charlevoix, objected to what he claimed were contradictory statements made by Mr. MacDonald, the then Minister of Veterans Affairs, in relation to the possible extension of the deadline applicable to the Veterans' Land Act. The remarks cited by Mr. Caouette in his presentation were made by the Minister on various occasions in the House, before a committee, and in letter to him. By way of privilege, Mr. Caouette sought to learn from the Minister exactly what he intended to do on this issue.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a parallel between that case and this. The complaint in that instance related to alleged contradictory statements made by one person, and I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that alleging contradiction between two members of the Government, a Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary, amounts to the same thing.

Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) for bringing this matter to the attention of the Chair. As well, I want to thank the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray), the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon), and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council (Mr. Lewis) for their contributions.

Given that this is a serious matter, I think it would be appropriate that the Chair reserve decision on it until later this day.

The allegation is that there are contradictions not only between what is set out in a memo written by someone in the U.S. and something said by a Minister of the Government, but also an alleged contradiction between what the Minister has said and what others speaking on behalf of the Government have said on the same issue.