

Privilege—Mr. Gauthier

of a communist base as an outpost of Soviet power in Central America which will ultimately threaten North America. Does he agree with that statement?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): That is clearly the opinion of the President of the United States. As my hon. friend knows, we have a different view.

CANADIAN POSITION

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, that question was put to the Prime Minister on the *MacNeil-Lehrer* report and I wish he had been a bit more forthcoming. Will he then say in this House what the real view of the Government is on that question? Does the Prime Minister agree with the position taken by the President?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I just said that I do not.

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AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE FOR GRAIN GROWERS

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. Farm organizations have been quick to request funds in support of grain growers but slower with specific advice on how the money should be distributed. Have those farm organizations been consulted and have they provided input on how they feel the benefit can be best distributed fairly and equitably amongst the farm community?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member will know that this is the biggest farm aid package ever put together to assist farmers. He will also know that the Minister of Agriculture has deliberately put in place a process by which farmers and the provinces can have some input. I think that is a refreshing change from the previous Government which used bureaucrats sitting in Ottawa to hatch out programs.

I think this process will serve farmers well. There has been one meeting already with the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier on a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

BROADCASTING OF PROCEEDINGS OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise with you a question of privilege which I think is of some importance to the House. It deals with

something that happened yesterday in the Standing Committee on Research, Science and Technology. This is not a reflection on the Chairman of that committee. I do not want at any time to reflect on his intentions. However, he ruled at the beginning of the meeting—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member is rising on a question of privilege, having given the Chair notice. It is a matter of considerable interest to all Hon. Members. Therefore, will Hon. Members please allow the Hon. Member to be heard?

Mr. Gauthier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to quote verbatim from the transcript of that committee meeting last night. The Chairman of the committee said:

Members of the committee, I have given permission to the press to record this meeting and for the television cameras to be in the room behind the press table. Is there any objection to that?

I immediately said yes, I have objections to that procedure. I explained to the Chair that in my view he did not have the power to authorize televising of those deliberations. I sent you a letter this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I will not read the whole letter because I think it will be—

Mr. Prud'homme: No, it is interesting.

Mr. Gauthier: No, I think it would be unusually long. I want to make two points. No committee chairman has the authority to allow televising or broadcasting of committee hearings. Indeed, parliamentary immunity which accompanies electronic *Hansard* at this time would not, unless so authorized by the House of Commons, cover the proceedings of a committee. That last point is, I think, the most important one to which I will refer.

I was trying to protect not only my interests but the interests of all Members of this House. As of now, the House has not allowed broadcasting by radio or television of committee proceedings. Citation 16 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition says that:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals. Thus, privilege, though part of the law of the land, is to a certain extent an exemption from the ordinary law.

I will try to prove to you that last night my rights and those of all Members, and indeed members of the fourth estate, the press, were in jeopardy had the Chairman been allowed to proceed.

I must say, before I go on, that the Chairman saw the wisdom of my comments and withdrew his permission. Nevertheless, I felt threatened, and I say this with all generosity, by his arbitrary decision. It made me uneasy. I for one believe that certain committee meetings can and should be televised, and therefore I am in total support of any expansion of coverage of our deliberations by the fourth estate. On the other hand, I felt that had this happened last night it could