

The Address—Mr. Crestohl

a disservice to Canada. The observation in question was made by a foreign correspondent. He is responsible for that disservice, as I explained when I made my statement to the house. I would ask the hon. member to immediately withdraw this statement.

Mr. Crestohl: Mr. Speaker, I was in the house when the minister made his statement. There was a series of them which—

Some hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Crestohl: Hon. gentlemen opposite are impatient to have me withdraw. I point out that I have a right to finish what I am saying before I withdraw, if indeed I come to the conclusion that I should withdraw.

The minister at that time made the statement that the remark with respect to the sale of uranium to Russia was a joke—

Mr. Churchill: I said no such thing, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise on a question of privilege. The hon. member is accusing me of things I did not say and he must withdraw.

Mr. Crestohl: Just a moment. If I have done the minister an injustice I will withdraw readily and promptly. If in saying the minister joked about the matter I am doing the hon. gentleman an injustice I will certainly withdraw. I was under the impression, as I believe many hon. members of this house were, in good faith, that in referring to the exchange between himself and the reporter the minister said, as I understood him, that the offer to sell uranium to Russia was meant as a joke. I did not see anything offensive in that. I believe that was the language that was used. All the newspapers reported it. I believe words to that effect will be found in *Hansard*. However, if the minister says he did not make the statement, that it was a joke, I will be pleased to withdraw. If the minister will now tell the house that is not what he said at that time I will withdraw.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, in addition, I made no offer whatever to sell uranium to Russia. What greater nonsense than that could the hon. member speak?

Mr. Graftey: You do not know the hon. member.

Mr. Churchill: I said nothing of the sort, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Crestohl: If the minister says he did not offer to sell uranium to Russia I will accept his statement. I am referring to the fact that he was reported to have said that a similar statement was made only as a joke. If no statement was made by the minister to the effect that this was a joke I will certainly withdraw.

An hon. Member: Another misquotation.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, we have another interjection about misquotation. There was no misquotation. I tell you that it was a planted story dreamed up by a foreign correspondent in Moscow and based on no evidence whatsoever. There was no offer whatsoever by me to sell uranium to Russia at any time.

Mr. Crestohl: Did the minister make any reference to its having been a joke, because if it was thought to be so—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the minister has stated from his place that he did not make an offer to sell uranium either seriously or as a joke. I take it that the hon. member who has the floor is quite prepared, as he should be, to accept the minister's statement in that respect, and therefore I think we might proceed.

Mr. Crestohl: If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, I shall certainly withdraw it.

Mr. MacEwan: Turn the page. Who wrote it?

Mr. Crestohl: Who writes your speeches?

Mr. MacEwan: I write my own.

Mr. Crestohl: How do you know I do not write mine?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member has a limited time and if he is allowed to proceed it will be in accordance with the practice.

Mr. Crestohl: I was discussing how Canada has not maintained the lofty position that it held before 1957. I say that if the cabinet ministers and members on the government side of the house are prepared to dig their heads deep into the sand, like ostriches, they can do so but it is the duty of the opposition to tell the country the true facts, and that is what we are doing and intend to continue to do. We do not have to rely on misquotations. I do not know of any other government with such a record of accusing newspapers of misquoting and misunderstanding them. I have a raft of misquotations here that ministers have sought to use as excuses on the floor of the house. Of course people are misquoted. People can make mistakes but it is hard to understand such an overwhelming number of misquotations and mistakes. The clearest illustration we have was that provided by the Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Sevigny) in the house in the last few days. He could have been misquoted but I say that so many apologetic statements do not do the government or the country much good.