

of Parliament. If he says he did not mean any innuendo, it is important that all Members take that as his position.

The Hon. Minister comes from a city where most people work in the oil industry. It is difficult not to have some kind of connection. However, there is a perception here and that is what it is. Whether it is within the realm of this House to deal with it, or if it is up to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to talk to the Minister, I honestly do not know. However, I would not want to think that, while we do not want to cast aspersions on other Members, we do not have the right to ask questions. As one Member has said, we mention names in the House and by association cast aspersions on those other people. I do not think that is necessarily the case.

● (1550)

I honestly do not think this is a question of privilege, as I said initially. I do not think the Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) is in a situation of conflict of interest, mainly because of the information which I had. I honestly believe that this is a very, very important question because, on the one hand, Members of Parliament need to have the right to have certain people work for them without being worried about the connotation of their involvement. As well, it is important that Members of Parliament be granted the right to ask questions. Where the perception exists I think it would be wrong for the Chair to limit the scope of Members of Parliament.

**Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to enter this but I think something is being missed, that is that there would be no pith or substance to what we are talking about right now if there were not a couple of particular things going on in the country. First, the largest corporate takeover controversy in the country is the Dome-Amoco deal. I think the Minister would be the first to admit that when you have a large riding association you must question the appropriateness of having the Vice-President of Amoco sending out a fund-raising letter in the midst of such a controversy. That is the pith and substance of why this issue is being raised as a question of privilege, although I do not believe it is a question of privilege.

The organization in Calgary Centre could have had anyone else send out the letter. It is not only a fund-raising letter. As I understand, it also says that the PCs have made the energy industry a high priority. The Minister is in the particularly important position of being responsible for both corporate affairs and consumer affairs. If Mr. Moore wants to write and send out hundreds of such fund-raising letters, he should be fully aware that some of them may end up in a newspaper or coming to the public's attention. The fact that this particular person, who happens to be the Vice-President of Amoco, has written a letter about the energy industry, fundraising for a particular Member at a particular time when an issue is highly controversial, is really the pith of this issue.

Let us shift ground a little bit. Let us say it was a Minister in another portfolio, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion for example, and Chrysler and GM were vying to

build a plant in a particular area and the vice-president of GM happened to send out, at a particularly controversial time, a fund-raising letter in that particular area.

We must gain some perspective from the portfolio of the Minister involved, why the question was asked, the timing of the letter, and the fact that the question of energy was raised, tying it to a major controversy in the country. It is important that the pith of this issue be kept in mind.

I am affronted by the comments of the Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) who said that he simply does not believe the Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell). That in itself constitutes a breach of privilege. The Minister shouted "scum bag" across the House and then withdrew it. We must keep in mind that the Minister and some Members on that side may be embarrassed that this has been raised. I am sure Mr. Moore was fully aware, when he put his signature to this letter and sent out hundreds of copies, that there was a possibility that it would come to the public's attention.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before anything is added to the debate, keep in mind that it is not for the Chair to rule as to whether or not there ought to be some kind of guideline which spells out that people in a riding association of a Member of Parliament ought not to do this or ought to do something else. That is not the issue which I have to determine. I have to determine whether the questions asked, and the context within which they were asked, injured the Minister sufficiently that his ability to function as a Member of this place and as a Minister would be diminished. That is the issue. That is what privilege is all about.

That is what I have to decide, and I would ask Hon. Members who have had the advantage of hearing some good arguments and wish to add something to this, to keep in mind that that is the issue. The issue is not whether or not there ought to be guidelines which cover this. The issue is whether the questions which were asked have damaged the Minister's ability to carry out the duties which he was sent here by the public to do.

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey—White Rock—North Delta):** Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be very brief. Every citizen in this land has the right to do his work unencumbered by aspersions or suggestions cast upon him by Members in this House. He has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and that includes the Minister.

The question is not only whether or not he infringed upon the rights of the Minister without intending to. The fact is that he created a suspicion of guilt. It appears to me that he deliberately created an impression of suspicion. As long as that suspicion exists he has hampered the work of the Minister. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there is a *prima facie* case that the Minister's rights have been violated by creating an unwarranted suspicion of the work of the Minister.