

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

this debate. I merely wish to rectify a fact mentioned by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) who has suggested, if I understood him correctly—and I want to check the official record in *Hansard* and reserve my privilege—that I read in English some evidence given in French before the Keable commission. The Quebec judicial administration recognizes both official languages.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The arguments have been presented on both sides. In the course of debating and discussing a question of privilege, there are going to be several points on which there will be diametric disagreement. Disagreements have been put with different positions taken by others, and arguments made that not all of the testimony was put—the type of arguments which are fundamental to such discussions. I would hope that we are not now going to go over every contribution which has been made to this rather lengthy discussion today, take it piece by piece and determine whether something which is in disagreement or put into discussion is now going to found a separate question of privilege.

[Translation]

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I have been accused of having distorted the meaning of the documents tabled. I have here the record of evidence given in English, I have read them in English and the hon. member is accusing me of saying that this has been done in French.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The parliamentary secretary is rearguing the point he made earlier in the day. I am not going to allow all of the participants to do that, and, therefore, I do not think I should allow any of the participants to do that.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I have yet to be recognized on a question of order which melds into a question of privilege. It has always been the practice in this House with respect to what you have just said not to apply the rule applicable in general debates limiting speakers on questions of privilege to one intervention. In particular, that rule has been applied over the years I have been here to members who raise questions of privilege.

There is one point that Your Honour, in my respectful submission—I should not use the term which I said I do not use—should be hearing from the mouth of the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham and which you have not heard. It is central to the question of privilege and to the problem upon which the Chair has put its finger, namely, when did the knowledge first come to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham? The hon. member has been attempting to rise to reassure the Chair that that knowledge first came to him this week, and you, sir, should hear that from him.

● (1512)

Mr. Speaker: With all due respect, I have heard that already from the hon. member for Yukon, who put on the record that he took the hon. member for Northumberland-

[Mr. Pinard.]

Durham at his word. So do I. I have taken all hon. members who have contributed to this discussion at their word. I do not think I have to do it again; that is my point.

MR. DIEFENBAKER—BUREAUCRATIC USE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBERS

Mr. Alan Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, you indicated earlier today that my question of privilege would come forward. I am taking the opportunity to respond to the invitation you gave yesterday in regard to the question of privilege raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), when you indicated that the minister might care to make a few comments on the point that was raised.

The matter of the use of social insurance numbers has received a great deal of attention in the House recently in various debates. I think it is important to set out the facts relating to the question raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert. He indicated that, in his view, the privileges of members of parliament were affected by the latest use of the social insurance number in connection with the cashing of Canada Savings Bonds coupons.

The point he raised is now part of the Income Tax Act and was part of the budget resolution of May, 1976, brought forward by the former minister of finance, the then hon. member for Rosedale, Mr. Macdonald. It became part of Bill C-22, passed in this House in February, 1977. Revenue Canada commenced administering the new regulations in July of that year so it is part of the law of Canada at this time.

This is not the only section of the Income Tax Act that relates to the use of social insurance numbers, as section 237 deals with the use of social insurance numbers on income tax returns and has been part of the law for several years.

The point raised by the right hon. member for Prince Albert suggests that perhaps Canadians are not aware of the increased use of this particular piece of administrative machinery without adequate warning. I want to bring to your attention, sir, and to the attention of the House that when the legislation was passed a press release was issued by the then minister of finance dated June 2, 1977, which referred to the pending issue of Canada Savings Bonds. I should like to put one paragraph of that press release on the record. It reads as follows:

When applying for purchase of new Canada Savings Bonds this fall, investors will be asked to provide their social insurance number if they have one. This information will be used exclusively as an account identifier and will form part of the base for a newly-designed computerized registration and retrieval system. The system will enable the government to provide better and faster service to investors when handling inquiries on their holdings of new Canada Savings Bonds. For the investor who holds bonds of several issues and counts on the annual interest income from them, the new system will ensure a single, prompt, accurately addressed payment by cheque or direct deposit.

In addition to that communication which received wide distribution, a press release was issued by the then minister of national revenue. It was labelled "For Immediate Release" and began as follows: