

Privilege—Mr. Mayer

It involves the Department of Agriculture publishing a very extensive and elaborate defence of the Bill about which we are talking respecting Canagrex. I find that it interferes with my privileges as a Member of Parliament in the sense that the Government has used the full weight of its printing press and the Minister has used the weight of his Department to make a one-sided case for a Bill before it has in fact become the law of the land.

I should like to quote from a December 10, 1979, ruling of Mr. Speaker Jerome, as reported at page 2180 of *Hansard*, in which he said:

The support of public funds, where applied to parliamentary activities, ought, I think, to apply across the floor of Parliament—

● (1610)

I submit, Madam Speaker, that parliamentary activities include the enabling of Members of Parliament to make their case properly for or against pieces of legislation that are in front of the House. When Speaker Jerome suggested that that ought to apply across the floor of the House, it implied to me that the Opposition ought to have access to the kinds of funds and expertise which the Minister had in preparing well over a 100-page document in both official languages in making what I consider a biased case for the Canagrex legislation. If I could go on for a minute—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Yes, the Hon. Member can go on as long as he comes to the point and tells me immediately where he feels his privilege has been affected. He is now discussing something but it does not constitute a question of privilege as he has argued it now, or from what I gathered from his notice. If the Hon. Member does have a specific point of privilege, I would like him to announce it now so that I can follow his arguments. There is a difference between grievances and privilege and I am sure the Hon. Member is quite aware of that.

Mr. Mayer: Very briefly, Madam Speaker, I feel that what I am discussing here today is very similar to what has become known in our Party as the Neil report, which report was undertaken during the brief period of time when we were the Government. At that time a Member of Parliament conducted a study on behalf of the Government of the day. Speaker Jerome at that time ruled the report could not be used in the House. In fact, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada ended up paying for the report.

I suggest that the Government should not be using its high offices to publish the type of report that is more suited to the kinds of activities done by research departments. I can give you some quotes from Speaker Jerome where he points out that those kinds of activities based on party policies, not on the law of the land, are much better financed by what we consider to be each party's very adequate research funds.

Madam Speaker: I know the case very well. Research was done by a caucus committee and the matter was ruled on by my predecessor. I know what subsequently happened. A department felt that the particular information would be

useful to it and it was decided to reimburse the Conservative caucus for its research, which was then distributed widely to the country or to the Members. However, the fact that the Government tried to distribute certain material one way or the other is not a matter on which the Chair can rule. It does not enter into the zone of what can be considered privilege.

How has the Member's privilege been affected? The Hon. Member knows the definition of privilege and I would like him to address that very shortly in his arguments, because he is telling me about a case of which I am aware. I know what the ruling is and I think the Hon. Member understands what it means as well. I would like the Hon. Member to come to his point of privilege.

Mr. Mayer: Madam Speaker, basically I am asking you to uphold the principle that each Member in this House has the same opportunity as the next; equity among Members, if you will. The Minister of Agriculture, through the weight of his Department, is able to mount argument for a piece of legislation that is not in fact the law of the land, to which I happen to be opposed and to which many of the people whom I represent are opposed, and I consider my privileges, as a Member of the House as equal as the Minister, have been severely interfered with. The Minister of Agriculture, through the weight of his department, published a 140-page document. I, as an individual Member of Parliament, have no access whatsoever to the kinds of resources or facilities by which I could put out that kind of document. This interferes with the performance of my job as a Member of Parliament. On the other hand, the Minister of Agriculture has these resources and facilities available to him. Specifically, that is why I think my privileges have been interfered with.

If you agree with me and let me go on, Madam Speaker, I can cite some examples for you from past rulings. If you disagree with me, I would find it incomprehensible for you to suggest that an individual Member of Parliament, such as myself, cannot have access to the same research and production facilities as a Minister of the Crown, because it puts me at a great disadvantage to my constituents.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. That particular point does not come within the purview of privilege. It does not constitute a question of privilege. If that is the Hon. Member's point, which he is telling me now it is, then I must tell him that is not in the realm of the practice which would allow me to find a *prima facie* case of privilege. Government spending, the way money is spent, the way documentation is distributed and the way Government chooses to announce certain policies might grieve Hon. Members considerably. They might want to protest that and debate it, which is quite legitimate and I would allow that under the proper proceedings. But I cannot allow this to be done by way of raising a question of privilege.

Mr. Mayer: Madam Speaker, may I then ask you what are the proper proceedings through which I can raise this issue? Let me further ask you if you think by your ruling today—and I take it by implication that you are in favour of allowing a