

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 16, 1973

The House met at 11 a.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. PAPROSKI—ALLEGED INACCURATE ANSWER TO QUESTION ON POLAR BEARS

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege with regard to an answer I received, as recorded on page 4893 of *Hansard*, for April 5, 1971, to my question No. 1184 on the slaughter of polar bears. The minister's assistant replied: "No polar bears were shot in 1971".

Figures released on Monday, February 12, 1973, at the Northwest Territories Council meeting revealed the killing of 2,735 polar bears in the eastern Arctic alone in a six year period, an average of 450 bears a year. This appears to contradict the answer given to me on page 4893 of *Hansard*. Obviously, the information supplied by the government was incorrect and deliberately evasive.

I bring this to the attention of the House because it indicates the lack of respect with which this House has been treated, and I request a complete investigation by the responsible minister. At the same time, I would request the minister to clarify the policy in view of the resolution of the Northwest Territories Council which promotes polar bear hunting by advertising in Europe.

I find, Sir, that this is a clear case of contempt of parliament by the minister or his officials. This House deserves an explanation of this apparent discrepancy regarding the fate of this great national asset, the polar bear, whose preservation is a matter of concern not only to conservationists and nature lovers but to all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker: This matter is obviously an important one, but I doubt that it can be raised by way of a question of privilege. The hon. member might be able to ascertain what the facts are during the question period or in some other way, but I suggest to him, with respect, that a dispute as to facts cannot be the basis of a question of privilege. Therefore I respectfully suggest to the hon. member that while the bears might have a question of privilege, I do not think the hon. member has one.

• (1110)

MR. HERBERT—OTTAWA "JOURNAL" ARTICLE ON VOTE ON INTRODUCTION OF BILL CONCERNING ABORTION

Mr. H. T. Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting the rights and privileges of all members of the House, concerning an article in the *Ottawa Journal* of February 14 under the byline of Mr. Richard Jackson. In reference to the vote on first reading of a private member's bill introduced by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt), he states:

What bothered the Liberals was that while many insisted they were voting not for abortion, but for the principle that every M.P. has a right to bring in a bill, their vote would reflect on them as pro-abortionists.

An hon. Member: You sure are.

Mr. Herbert: This statement, and others in the article, are inaccurate and misleading. Many of us, and not solely the new members of our party, were primarily concerned with parliamentary practice and the right of all members of the House—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Herbert: —to introduce bills and motions—

An hon. Member: Are you for or against?

Mr. Herbert: —whether or not we agree with the proposition. The content of the bill was secondary to the consideration of the principle involved, that of freedom of speech in parliament.

I would also state, Mr. Speaker, that I consider it an indictment of the individuals that a former member of the judiciary and a former Prime Minister should seek to deny to their fellow Canadians the right to freedom of speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We will deal with one thing at a time. The hon. member did give the Chair notice of his intention to bring this situation to the attention of the House by way of a question of privilege. While the hon. member may have a grievance, I suggest that it is not a question of privilege. In any event, the hon. member did not propose a motion for the consideration of the House, so a ruling is not necessary.

Mr. McGrath: On a point of order, the hon. gentleman has no right to impute motives or to reflect on the vote of any hon. member of this House—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: —and, more particularly, to impute motives to or to reflect on the vote of a very distinguished member of this House, the right hon. member for Prince Albert, a former Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: I believe that the hon. member should be made to withdraw that portion of his remarks.

Some hon. Members: Withdraw!