

12 of Beauséne that says that that certainly is not a question of privilege. There may be some confusion about when a decision is made. Is a decision made when a consensus is reached in cabinet? Is it when four ministers, or whatever number, sign it? Is it made when the Deputy Governor General signs the order in council?

Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I do not think it is particularly pertinent when the decision was made. That is not the issue; the issue is whether the minister intentionally and deliberately misled the House. He has given us his word that he did not.

Mr. Crosbie: Yes, he did.

Mr. Smith: That is the end of it. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I am disappointed, when this man of integrity has given his word that he did not mislead the House, that we even have any continuation of this debate.

There certainly is not a prima facie case of privilege here and the sooner this question is disposed of the better. Then we can start treating our colleague with the honour and dignity that he deserves.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Smith), who just took his seat, put his finger right on the problem: We have to be able to rely on ministers giving truthful and factual answers in this House. That is what we are talking about.

It is interesting that the hon. parliamentary secretary cited the Profumo case. It might be well for us to remember that Mr. Profumo, who was minister of war in the British government, resigned from the House not because his actions were a threat to national security, not because he was found to be consorting with a prostitute, but because he was found to be lying to the House.

Mr. Pinard: And he admitted it.

Mr. McGrath: That is a very serious matter.

Mr. Clark: He was honest.

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, my privileges are affected by the question put before the House by the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie). If I cannot be satisfied that I can rely on receiving honest and factual answers to the questions that I raise in this House, then I cannot function as a member of this House, and I cannot effectively serve my country, my province or my constituency. It is as simple as that.

I listened to the Minister of Justice, for whom I have great respect. From his seat he says "Come on!" and tends to cast some doubt upon that. The fact of the matter is, however, that the record shows, in my view, that there is a prima facie case to be made that the minister deliberately misled the House.

That is all you have to decide, Madam Speaker. You do not have to decide if the minister deliberately misled the House;

that is for the House to decide. You merely have to decide that there is a prima facie case that the minister deliberately misled the House.

When is a decision not a decision? On May 18, the Minister of Justice stood in the House and said:

Madam Speaker, I said that there has been no decision made by the government at this time on that question.

• (1640)

It was not "no conditional decision"; it was "no decision". That was in reply to a very simple and straightforward question put to him by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark).

The following day in the House the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said, and I quote from page 17592 of *Hansard*:

Madam Speaker, the cabinet met yesterday, yesterday morning. It took what in effect was a conditional decision, and that decision became effective this morning.

We are not concerned about when the decision became effective; what is at issue here is when the decision was made. And we have it on the authority of the Prime Minister that the decision was made on the morning of the day that the Minister of Justice stood in his place in the House and told the House that no decision had been made. That is the whole question we have before us here today.

The question of the implementation of the decision is irrelevant. The question of the decision being conditional is irrelevant. Conditional on what? Madam Speaker, it is obvious that the decision had been made. The implementation was conditional on the Minister of Justice getting on an airplane and going to St. John's and announcing it at a press conference. That was the process of implementation, but that is not our concern. Our concern here is that the decision had been made on the day the Minister of Justice stood in his place in this House and said that no decision had been made.

I believe, Madam Speaker, and I submit to you with great respect, that this is a very important question. I do not want to talk about the substance of the question in terms of the impact it will have on federal-provincial relations, on the future of my province or the future of the development of the important Hibernia field, important though that may be. I am concerned with the effect it is going to have on how I can continue to function as a member of this House if I cannot rely on ministers to give honest, factual answers to the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Madam Speaker, that is what is at issue here. The record shows the minister's answer in this House to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition at page 17534 of *Hansard* on May 18. There is the subsequent action of the Minister of Justice in preparing the documents, ordering an aircraft, going to St. John's, Newfoundland, and then arranging a press conference and announcing the decision.