

Disposal Schedule of the Government of Canada directive. However, in some instances the Department was able to provide information. The following Departments provided information: Canadian International Development Agency indicated that there was \$1,625 for expertise in connection with the Country Program Director Training Program. The Department of Communications listed the grants or contributions from the Department's Book Publishing Industry Development Program. In 1979-80, \$131,793 for sales and marketing assistance, 1980-81, \$169,555, sales and marketing assistance, \$2,760 for a feasibility study, \$4,837 for a feasibility study, for a total of \$177,152.

In 1981-82, \$146,613 was granted for sales and marketing assistance, \$4,797 for computerization study, \$49,947 for computer purchase, for a total of \$201,357. In 1982-83, \$94,659 for sales and marketing assistance, \$10,233 for computerization implementation, for a total of \$104,892. In 1983-84, \$96,440 for sales and marketing assistance, for a total of \$96,440. In 1984-85, \$110,527 for sales and marketing assistance, \$33,939, company analysis for a total of \$144,466.

I just have a couple more, Mr. Speaker, if you will bear with me. In 1985-86, \$227,324 sales and marketing assistance, \$1,307 international marketing assistance for a total of \$228,631—

Mr. Speaker: I know the Hon. Member has probably been anticipating some concern on the part of the Speaker. This information is, of course, available and may very well be very pertinent to the question of privilege the Hon. Member brings to the Chair, but I am having a little difficulty in seeing exactly where the point of privilege comes and I would ask, in the interests of brevity in argument, that the Hon. Member conclude whatever it is the Chair needs to know and then argue the point of privilege. I have tried to be very patient here.

Mr. Shields: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I am trying to point out—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member for Athabasca could just be patient for a moment and I will come back to him. The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) on a point of order.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have listened attentively for the last four or five minutes and I too have difficulties. If the Hon. Member actually has a grievance with the quality of the answer, he should state so at the beginning of his remarks. I would like to know what the question of privilege is. I would like to know what the question of privilege is. According to *Beauchesne's Fifth Edition* an answer to a question cannot be the object of a question of privilege.

● (1530)

If the Government has not given the Hon. Member a definitive or satisfactory answer, I refer him to Citation 19 of

Beauchesne's which states that a dispute arising between two Members, or the failure of a Minister of the Crown to answer a question may not be raised as a question of privilege. I do not mind sitting here and listening to the Hon. Member's question, but I would appreciate it if he would come to the point.

Mr. Speaker: I know that the Hon. Member would like to get to the point. Clearly, what the Hon. Member has advised the House and the Chair is that over a period of time certain government grants or other forms of government assistance have gone to either the gentleman mentioned or the gentleman's firm. However, I am not clear yet as to whether or not the Hon. Member's complaint, which may or may not be privilege, is in the adequacy of the answers, the fact that a government Department may or may not still have the records, or just exactly where the argument is leading. I would ask the Hon. Member to assist the Chair.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member and yourself for the guidance that has just been given to me.

In late February, as a result of the answer tabled in the House, I received a letter from a Mr. A. H. Lefever of the law firm of Reynolds, Mirth, Richards and Farmer of Edmonton stating that he was acting for Mel Hurtig and intended to proceed with a defamation action and would be issuing a statement of claim in seven to ten days.

I ignored the letter because I felt that it was rather silly and vexatious and an attempt, basically, to silence me. We know that Mr. Hurtig had led the charge against free trade. As a former Liberal candidate in Edmonton, he was leading the charge. He became very political.

I then received a second letter in late March which was double registered. It was from a Frans F. Slatter of the law firm of McCuaig, Desrochers of Edmonton in which it was stated that they were acting for Hurtig Publishers Ltd. They indicated that, pursuant to Section 13 of the Defamation Act, their client's intention to bring an action against me for information that I received in reply to my question on the Order Paper of October 15, 1987.

The letter further indicated that the information that I received was inaccurate and misleading as to the amount, nature, source and circumstances of government funding obtained for *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and related projects. Again, I felt that this was an obvious attempt in that the first law firm had dropped the case because, in my view, it felt it did not have one. Mr. Hurtig then approached another law firm and it proceeded with an action.

It is my belief that these two letters were a deliberate attempt to intimidate me from seeking further information with regard to grants given by the Government to Mel Hurtig or Hurtig Publishers.

I then had a phone call a couple of days ago from a Mr. Keith Davidson of Edmonton who is a process server. He indicated that he would like to meet with me for a brief