

Privilege—Mr. Trudeau

ing that the Ontario government would, presumably, have the initiative of inviting the United Nations or foreign governments to Canada.

If the context is looked at, it is evident that my comment followed a series of questions by the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) asking me why the government was not cancelling the invitation and, later, a question by the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) enjoining us, really, to cancel the invitation.

I think it is quite clear—certainly it is clear in my mind—that of course this government has the responsibility for inviting foreign countries or international organizations to come to Canada. If we do not want them to come, it is our responsibility to take such a position. I have never tried to slough off that responsibility. As a matter of fact, each time I was asked a question either here in the House or by the press as to what we were planning to do about the conference scheduled for September, I said the government was considering the position it had to take.

Mr. Lawrence: Is this a point of order?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether it will satisfy the opposition more if I call it a question of privilege, but I have referred to the statement by the Leader of the Opposition about "this apparent effort of the Prime Minister to mislead the House..."

Some hon. Members: That's right.

Mr. Trudeau: Hon. members shout, "That's right". In that case, I would think they would let me give an explanation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was given the Chair notice of his intention to raise this subject either by way of a question of privilege or a point of order. I propose, as has always been the practice, to hear the hon. member who raised the point and then to determine whether it is a valid question of privilege. It has also been the general practice, before doing so, to hear at least one member from the opposition side in order to balance the question.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am just trying to throw light on this matter, particularly because Mr. Grossman has sent me a telegram asking for an apology.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: I do feel that the record should be set straight as, of course, will be done in my answer to Mr. Grossman's telegram. I repeat that my words, placed in the context in which they were stated, would, I thought, lead to no misunderstanding. Certainly, there was no attempt made by the government to state that it had no responsibility to decide whether or not the conference would take place, and with what participants.

This having been said, I repeat that the position I took is not only technically correct but is really correct in the sense that not only was the invitation extended by Mr. Grossman, on behalf of the Government of Canada—

[Mr. Trudeau.]

An hon. Member: He stuck his neck out?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, he stuck his neck out and he issued this invitation.

Mr. Lawrence: What you should be doing is apologizing.

Mr. Trudeau: I have a lot of time and I enjoy these interruptions. If the hon. member wants to make some more, let us hear from the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence).

Mr. Lawrence: May I speak on this question of privilege?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Trudeau: I would yield the floor for a question, but I have not made my point yet. I just want to help those gentlemen who are anxious to interrupt.

Mr. Nowlan: What kind of hocus-pocus is this?

● (1510)

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, would you please rule on whether or not I have the right to speak? I seem to hear some disagreement from the other side.

Mr. Speaker: I have already indicated that the right hon. Prime Minister has given the Chair notice of his intention to raise a question of privilege. I hope that the right hon. Prime Minister will be permitted to conclude his point very briefly and I will then hear the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I will make two very brief points. The first is that in fact the Ontario government did write to the United Nations in the first place to ask that the conference be held in Toronto. The United Nations at that time expressed some surprise that the invitation came from the Ontario government rather than from the Government of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Finally, after some exchange between the federal government and the provincial government, the federal government did extend the invitation to come to Canada. The form of the invitation was then discussed, and Mr. Grossman wrote the federal government on July 30, 1970, confirming Ontario's, and I quote, "agreement to join in invitation for the fifth congress" and suggesting, I am again quoting, that "while in Vancouver we prepare a statement extending joint invitation".

That is not the way we understand international relations, Mr. Speaker, but the technicality is not important. The fact is that the federal government, the Government of Canada, did have this invitation extended through a participant at the conference at that time, who happened to be Mr. Grossman, and those working with him, and I think the correspondence indicates that they were at least as important fathers of the idea as was the federal government.

The only other matter I would add to substantiate this is to refer to an excerpt from the debates of the legislature of