

minister's answers to me today, there is no legal question involved. The minister has stated his view of what the law is, and we are quite in agreement on that. He has eliminated any question of law and, therefore, in dealing with this matter there is no question of law for you to decide. It is now settled on both sides of the House that this deal made by Petro-Canada, or by a subsidiary of Petro-Canada, does involve a financial liability on the Government of Canada described more precisely as a contingent liability.

I do not know why the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources were at such pains a couple of days ago to leave the impression there was no financial liability with regard to this on the part of the Government of Canada. The Deputy Prime Minister may have honestly believed the Government of Canada was not involved in any financial liability. But I submit it is very clear that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources never believed that, or he was awfully careless if he did.

In short, I submit I have a question of privilege in that I was misled by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on Monday. He continued, if I may say so, to try to cover this up yesterday in the way he referred to my question, trying to pretend I asked him a question different from the one I put to him. It was very clear today, though, that he could no longer maintain any kind of cover, and consequently he had to answer my question correctly. The answer given today is directly opposite to the answer he gave me two days ago, and, if Your Honour agrees there is no question of law for you to decide and that there is indeed a *prima facie* case of privilege, based on the answer I was given on Monday being directly opposed to the answer I received today, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens):

That the answer given to me by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on November 13 constituted a misrepresentation in the light of his answer to me today and that these answers of the Minister be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to determine whether the answer given by the minister on November 13 constituted a breach of my privileges.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that not only is there no question of law involved, but there is really no question of fact to be disputed.

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear from the tactics the opposition members have used in the first three days of this week that they are trying to work themselves out of a serious dilemma, a dilemma in which their own leader has placed them. Their leader has placed their party against Petro-Canada, against the corporation which was created by this parliament to provide for the future energy security of Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillespie: Their dilemma is how to deal with the politically embarrassing position in which they have been placed, so they have used the ruse of legal obfuscation.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Stick to privilege!

Privilege—Mr. Stanfield

Mr. Gillespie: They are using the tactic of legal obfuscation to try to deal—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know the minister would not want to lead us into a debate on the merits of Petro-Can or the acquisition by that Crown corporation of Pacific Petroleum. The narrow question I have to decide is whether the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield) and the hon. member for York-Simcoe have a question of privilege—I am not sure about the regularity of having both cases before me at the same time.

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, may I refer to the notice which was given to you with respect to a question of privilege by the hon. member for York-Simcoe. In giving reasons why he wanted to give notice for his question of privilege he cited the question which was put by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield). When he actually spoke on his question of privilege though, he seemed to slide off that point and concentrate more on the act itself, on section 23, in particular, of the Petro-Canada Act. I was therefore placed in the position that both hon. members were concerned with the question of guarantees.

I should like to re-read the question which was put by the hon. member for Halifax, as reported at page 1050 of the *House of Commons Debates* on November 13. He said:

Is the minister saying, in connection with the Petro-Can purchase, and the financial transactions involved, that there is absolutely no financial responsibility on the part of the federal government?

These are the important words:

Is he saying, not only that the federal government did not engage in any express guarantee—

The words “any express guarantee” I judged to be the important statement. If those words were not intended to be important, I do not understand why the hon. member used them.

Mr. Woolliams: Read the whole thing.

Mr. Gillespie: It was a long and convoluted question, as the record shows. The hon. member has read out the rest of that question. It was a long and convoluted question of the kind for which, on occasion, the hon. member for Halifax has become famous.

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Gillespie: I believe it is perfectly in order for a minister, when answering a long and convoluted question, to extract what he considers to be the relevant portion of that question. The hon. member specifically referred to express guarantees under the Petro-Canada Act. I dealt with that in my remarks. There is an express guarantee section in the Petro-Canada Act, and it is section 21(1) and (2). I think it is important in the context of this debate to reintroduce that particular set of words because those words are relevant to our discussion. Under the sub-title “guarantees”, section 21(1) of the Petro-Canada Act reads as follows: