

Privacy Act, which is a statute of this House, and Members of the House are not above the law.

One of the most important aspects of the issue which confronts us in this case is the fact that the Minister of Finance was permitted to level an accusation against another Member of the House without being prepared to move a substantive motion. It is a well established principle of this place, and you, yourself, Mr. Speaker, have ruled so as recently as last Tuesday, that Members should not be subjected to unfounded attacks on their honour. In your ruling of last Tuesday, you found that the Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) did not have a question of privilege with respect to the actions of the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussi eres). The question of whether or not the Minister should take responsibility for correcting the records of the House to remove his contradictory statements was not properly before the House. That was your ruling. It was your view that the conduct of the Minister could only be questioned if an accusation were to be levelled against the Minister in a substantive motion moved by another Member.

I could go on to quote a ruling by Mr. Speaker Michener given on June 19, 1959 which you, Sir, cited on January 24, 1984, as found at page 702 of *Hansard*.

It would appear to me that last Tuesday the rules and practices of the House provided protection for the Minister of National Revenue from having his honour challenged and from having a committee of the House look into matters concerning statements made in the House with respect to the Minister's responsibility for the direction and administration of his Department.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the rules and practices of the House provided no protection for the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Central Nova, or any Member not sitting on the Treasury benches for having his or her honour as a Member of this place but, more important, as a private citizen, being questioned by a Minister without the Minister even thinking of moving a substantive motion. That, Sir, was a grievous breach of order, and one on which, I respectfully submit, Your Honour will have to rule. For the House to work in an orderly way, as it was meant to do, the rules must be fair, they must seem to be fair and they must apply equally and evenly to all Members regardless of where those Members sit.

There can be no doubt in your mind as to the extent to which the Minister questioned the honour of the Leader of the Opposition. I would draw Your Honour's attention to the words found in *Hansard* at page 693, which I have already quoted.

I will now conclude. I could give you citations from *Hansard* and *Beauchesne* but, Sir, I think there is a greater issue here. I could refer Your Honour to Citation 145 and Citation 150 of *Beauchesne's*, but I think there is a greater issue here. The issue is this: Do the people of the country have the right to expect that they can deal with their elected Government in a private and confidential way? Now we have something new brought in by the President of the Privy Council. He sent out a signal today that any correspondence which is not marked

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private and confidential can be released notwithstanding the provisions of the Privacy Act. He said that. That is something I hope Your Honour will look at and look at very carefully.

• (1610)

My submission, Sir, is that you look at this question seriously and that you look at the provisions of the Privacy Act in the context of Standing Order 39, in the context of the privileges and immunities we enjoy in this House, and in the context of the statutes we have passed in the House to which we are all bound, statutes which are designed to protect the privacy of the citizens of this land in this age of computers and data banks.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, so that there can be some time remaining to discuss the business intended for today, namely the allotted day, I assure you that that will be the last intervention from members of the Official Opposition. That is unfortunately the case.

There are three other points which are related but could be described as separate that flow from this whole series of events. One relates to the completeness of the record itself that was going to be raised with the Chair today. A second relates to the accuracy of the documents in possession of the House, which we intended to raise today, and the third has to deal with the alteration of *Hansard* itself which does not jibe with the videotape of our proceedings. That has been altered, and I do not want to leave any innuendoes hanging from that. But we are going to raise those points today. Time is simply too short.

I cannot emphasize enough our pleasure at the apology the Minister has made. As the Government House Leader said, that indeed is the parliamentary thing to do. Had he stopped there, it would have improved matters, but he did go on to refer to private conversations. If we addressed all those matters today, it would take up the entire remainder of the day. I do not think the House is disposed to do that. We will have other opportunities at other times, I am sure, to raise these remaining points with the Chair so that the kind of precedent which was set last week will never again occur. Members on all sides of the house would regret if we got into a situation as a result of what happened last week where none of us could feel secure as Members in communicating with the Government but, even more important, the individual citizen of this country now has some doubts—must have—as to the inviolability of his or her communications with the Government. That is a situation which cannot be allowed.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has a certain difficulty at this point. If there is additional material to be set out—perhaps something more of an indication of what is involved, the reference to *Hansard*, for example—the Chair would prefer to have Hon. Members follow the example of the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) who intervened briefly and succinctly. If other Hon. Members have something which should be added to the record, perhaps it should be done.