

MR. DIONNE (NORTHUMBERLAND-MIRAMICHI)—CHARGES OF ABUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege issuing from this day's proceedings. During proceedings under Standing Order 21, several members of the Opposition made slanderous charges that back-bench Members on the Government side of the House were abusing public funds. That is a very serious charge. The same charges were repeated in Question Period. Those charges are unproven and unfounded. The Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) specifically stated that back-bench Members, and he included all back-bench Members on the Government side, had abused Government funds.

Mr. Forrestall: Did you get left out?

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): It is unusual for the Hon. Member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) to behave in that manner. Even worse, those allegations are based on news reports which can best be described as stupid. In both cases those statements are a clear violation of the privileges accorded by the House to its Members.

I cite for your consideration from Beauchesne's Fifth Edition Citations Nos. 49, 50, 51 and 319(3). Even more important, I refer to Citation No. 40 which clearly states:

—where the propriety of a Member's actions is brought into question, a specific charge must be made.

I have never abused any public funds. I have, as I am elected and paid to do, sought and achieved very substantial Government expenditures in my riding for worthy and essential projects. I shall continue to fight for more. The only projects under which my riding has received funds are the Canada Works Program and the Student Summer Employment Program. That is applied by the same formula to every riding in this country.

I ask that you examine those statements, especially those made by the Hon. Member for Churchill, the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) and the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn), to establish if my privileges have been breached. If Members are to be allowed to stand in the House and hurl accusations at other Members of the House that they have abused public funds without any substantiation except a dumb newspaper story, where do we end up as Members who are supposed to have respect for the House and for each other?

If you prefer, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to move that those statements mentioned, and perhaps others which I will check in today's *Hansard*, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections for appropriate action.

Mr. Speaker: The question of privilege is a narrow and technical one, matters affecting Hon. Members and preventing them from the performance of their duty. In the opinion of the Chair, there is a difference as to fact and—

Mr. Nielsen: Can we be heard before you rule?

Point of Order—Mr. McMillan

Mr. Speaker: The Chair was not sympathetic to the question of privilege. The concern of the Chair is the time of the House.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): I will be brief. I feel that initially every question of privilege raised by a Member is deserving of consideration by the Chair. However, other views than a single view should be sought before the Chair rules. That is a personal observation, not intended to reflect in any way upon the Chair.

● (1540)

I would like to support the submission made by the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne). I do not quite agree with the thrust that he has taken in it from the exchange today, but we would have no objection whatsoever to having the question raised by him referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, either in the form which he has suggested that it be presented or a simple reference of the matter raised by him so that the whole matter can be thoroughly aired, with witnesses heard, and we can get to the truth of the matter.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Hon. Member has not established a case of privilege. A dispute as to facts is not privilege. Argument is argument, the Parliament obviously makes strange bedfellows from time to time, but it is the opinion of the Chair that the Hon. Member does not have a case of privilege.

The Hon. Member for Hillsborough (Mr. McMillan) on a point of order.

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POINTS OF ORDER

MR. McMILLAN—OMISSION IN *HANSARD* RECORD

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I rise to correct a very important omission in the *Hansard* record of Friday, February 3, 1984, in connection with a question I posed in the Oral Question Period to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. De Bané) about the reopening of the Georgetown Seafoods plant in Prince Edward Island.

I have brought the matter to the attention of the English *Hansard* Editor and, after carefully reviewing the tapes and the relevant "blues", it was agreed that an important part of the Minister's response to me on the day in question was omitted from *Hansard*. Since the issue is of such urgency in Prince Edward Island, I believe, as I think he does, it is necessary to set the record straight immediately rather than await any changes to the official *Hansard* at a later date.

Very briefly, I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on Friday for a commitment that the Georgetown Seafoods plant on Prince Edward Island would be reopened in time for the new fishing season, which starts in May, with the help of the Minister and his Department, especially with respect to an