

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, July 19, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. ATKEY—REFERENCE TO ANSWER BY PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Ron Atkey (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege as a result of a substantive change in *Hansard* of the answer given by the Prime Minister to a supplementary question I put to him yesterday. My line of questioning concerned one Ronald Patrick Lippert, a Canadian who has been held as a political prisoner in a Cuban jail for ten years. I asked the Prime Minister whether he was taking into account the fact that the prisoner himself, through his family, had requested the intervention of the Prime Minister.

The answer given to me in the House by the right hon. gentleman was, to the best of my recollection: "Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of that fact." My recollection has been confirmed by the hon. member for Leeds who has taken a continuing interest in the subject matter of the question. Yet *Hansard* reports the Prime Minister's answer as follows: "Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was made aware of that fact."

This is really the opposite of the Prime Minister's actual answer given in the House. Either *Hansard* has made an important error of substance or, as more likely may be the case, the Prime Minister or someone from his office has deliberately changed the answer on the blues prior to printing when it was found that the Prime Minister had made a mistake. If the latter is correct, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that this deliberate change in substance infringes not only on my privileges but on the privileges of all hon. members in the light of the dangerous and unfortunate precedent which is set.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would rather the Prime Minister did not reply to the hon. member's charge. It is very seldom that the Chair intervenes in matters such as this, but when a serious accusation has been made, as has been made today by the hon. member for St. Paul's with the apparent support of the hon. member for Leeds, the Chair thinks it has a duty to look at the record. I have looked at the record, and the hon. member's charge that someone in the Prime Minister's office has altered the record is without substance. The record shows that according to the *Hansard* report—and I think hon. members would wish to give some substance to the reports and the records as they appear for the benefit of the House—that the Prime Minister used the following words: "Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was made aware of that fact." That has not been corrected by anyone, so the hon. member's question of privilege is at least questionable.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a question of privilege?

Mr. Cossitt: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: It cannot be on the same question of privilege, because I ruled there was no question of privilege.

Mr. Cossitt: In view of the fact that my name has been mentioned by the hon. member for St. Paul's, I feel I should be entitled to make a brief statement on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is not entitled to make a statement on that point. The hon. member for St. Paul's raised an alleged question of privilege. I have studied the record. I say there is no question of privilege. If the hon. member for Leeds wished to raise a question of privilege he ought to have given advice and notice to the Chair. This, he did not do. I think we have to proceed with the business of the House.

● (1410)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ENERGY

SUGGESTED MEETING OF CANADA-UNITED STATES INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP TO DISCUSS TAPS TANKER ROUTE—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask leave to present a motion under Standing Order 43. The motion speaks for itself, so that no preamble is necessary. I believe if hon. members listen to it carefully, they will agree to it. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Harding):

That Mr. Speaker be requested to seek an immediate meeting of the Canada-United States Interparliamentary Group, so that Canadian parliamentarians can make known to their United States counterparts their views on the movement of Alaskan oil down the west coast of British Columbia and through the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's motion is proposed under the terms of Standing Order 43 and requires the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed? There appears to be unanimous consent.