

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 19, 1973

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

## PRIVILEGE

### MR. JELINEK—ALLEGED CONFLICT OF INTEREST RESPECTING TELEVISION COVERAGE OF OLYMPIC GAMES—ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege dealing with a matter which has now been made public through the media and as a result my integrity in debating and voting on matters concerning the public business that comes before this chamber may be questioned by a portion of the public.

The facts are that during the oral question period on Monday, September 17, I directed a question to the Prime Minister concerning television coverage of the Olympic games. The question and answer are to be found on page 6626 of *Hansard*. At about 4.30 that afternoon I received a telephone call in my parliamentary office. The caller identified himself as an employee of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He refused to give his name. He stated he wanted to do me a favour, namely, to warn me to cease asking further questions on the subject I had raised that afternoon in the oral question period. Otherwise, he continued, it would be publicly alleged that I had a contract with CTV and therefore a conflict of interest.

The following day, yesterday, I attempted to be recognized during the oral question period without success. However, upon going into the opposition lobby when the question period ended I received another telephone call. This time, in less courteous terms, I was told that for my own good I had better lay off my inquiries into the television coverage of the Olympic games. Again, the caller did not identify himself by name.

I need not cite to you, Mr. Speaker, the precedents which establish how seriously the House regards any attempt to intimidate a member in the performance of his duties. I also need not point out to all hon. members how difficult it can be for a member to refute allegations made against him of conflict of interest. It is extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, for him to do this by himself. When the accuser is nameless, the member cannot have recourse to the courts to clear his name. I therefore take this opportunity to assure the House that in no way am I involved in a conflict of interest in this matter or in any other. Should any member feel disposed to call me before a standing committee of the House to investigate this matter, I would be more than willing to comply.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for High Park-Humber Valley has given the Chair the notice required under the Standing Order. Since receiving the notice I have had an

opportunity to consider all aspects of the matter raised by the hon. member.

The House will appreciate that there is some difficulty in finding a prima facie case of privilege in circumstances where no charge has been made and there has been no suggestion in the House of any irregularity or impropriety. There is really nothing for the House or one of its committees to consider under the heading of privilege. Indeed, we have no motion before us to this effect. At the same time, I have no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.

The hon. member has made his position clear. In view of all circumstances, I would think no further action by the House should be required at this time.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege. I just want to say, in view of the absence of the minister responsible for the CBC, that I can say without any danger that any person alleging to be speaking on behalf of the CBC would obviously be lying. I do not believe there was any indication in the hon. member's statement that he was impugning the CBC for acting in this way. I just want to assure him that it is inconceivable to me, and I am sure to the House, that the CBC would approach a member of parliament in that way.

● (1410)

**Mr. Baldwin:** If the Prime Minister wants to wait until the minister returns to defend the action of the CBC, then I think we should have a debate on the issue.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would assume it is not the wish of hon. members that this matter be sent to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. I am sure hon. members are not serious in making that suggestion. I am sure the hon. member for High Park-Humber Valley does not suggest that his conduct should be sent to the committee for consideration or investigation by it.

My suggestion is that the situation is very clear, very simple and uncomplicated. The hon. member has indicated what the facts of the situation are. We have to accept his statement that these are the facts, and in the circumstances I suggest that nothing at all would be gained by having a debate, either in the House or in a committee, on the matter raised by the hon. member for High Park-Humber Valley.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, on the same point and despite what you have said, I point out to Your Honour that the hon. member who raised the point of privilege informed the House that someone who would not give his name, and who represented himself to be an employee of the CBC,