

Privilege—Mr. Mackasey

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. MACKASEY—PAID LOBBYIST ALLEGATION IN MONTREAL
"GAZETTE"

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Lincoln): Madam Speaker, in a series of articles beginning last Thursday in the *Montreal Gazette*, it was repeatedly stated that I owned a numbered company, 109609 Canada Limited, and that I was a paid lobbyist. A Member who is a paid lobbyist, soliciting the Government, is breaking the law and has no right to be sitting in the House of Commons.

I have, of course, and I say this with great satisfaction, spent most of my 20 years in public life lobbying. I have lobbied for the elderly, for the underprivileged and for the unemployed. I have lobbied for businessmen, for companies and for industries from one end of Canada to the other, and so has every Member of the House of Commons. Lobbying for constituents and for other Canadians is very certainly not against the law. It is, in fact, a vital part of the responsibility we have as Members.

But, of course, that is not the issue before the House. That is not the accusation. That, of course, is not why I am standing here at this moment. I am standing here because I have been accused of being a paid lobbyist. If I were a paid lobbyist, I would be in violation of the Senate and House of Commons Act. In short, Madam Speaker, I would be a lawbreaker who has no right to be sitting in this House. That is the accusation, and I wish to deal with it right here and now.

Madam Speaker, do I own or have I ever owned this famous numbered company, 109609? My answer is categorical, and my answer is no.

Did I ever directly or indirectly own any share of 109609? My answer is categorical, and my answer is no.

Madam Speaker, was I ever paid or promised payment to lobby for 109609 or for any other company or companies associated with it? My answer is categorical, and my answer is no.

Finally, did I promise, in exchange for payment, direct or indirect, to lobby at some future time for 109609, for Les Ateliers d'usinage Hall Ltée., or for any other company or companies associated with it? My answer is categorical, and my answer is no.

[Translation]

Did I ever agree to be financially rewarded, directly or indirectly, for lobbying on behalf of a numbered company, 109609 Canada Limited, namely, Les Ateliers d'usinage Hall Ltée., or any company associated with it? The answer is no, Madam Speaker.

[English]

Madam Speaker, these false and slanderous accusations in the *Montreal Gazette*, Quebec's only English daily, have humiliated my family, tarnished my reputation and, if left unchallenged, could even blemish the reputation of this institution and those who serve in it; for as I noted just two

weeks ago in debate, the reputation of the House reflects the individual and collective integrity of its Members.

The privileges of this House, of its Members, are privileges which have been accumulated through the centuries, privileges which we guard jealously in this House. One of those privileges which is mine as a Member is to ask the House, my fellow colleagues from all Parties, to accept my word as an honourable gentleman. That is a privilege which is mine, but it is a privilege which I do not intend to abuse or hide behind. I have too much respect for this institution to abuse its privileges.

To remove the blemish on myself and on my family, and any possible reflection on this institution which I respect so much, which dishonesty on my part could cause, I wish to move the following motion:

That the allegations in the *Montreal Gazette* on March 10, March 11 and March 12 of 1983 that the Hon. Member for Lincoln owned 109609 Company Canada Limited and, through that company, while being a Member of the House of Commons, was a paid lobbyist, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections as soon as possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) has been a Member of this House for a good many years—and I was here when he first became a Member—during which time he has established a reputation for fairmindedness and decency, a reputation which all of us can appreciate he would want to preserve.

We have received no notice of his actions today. While we all expected that on the first occasion of his return to the House he would be doing just what he did, we have not had time to consider the terms of reference which he has proposed and which we have heard for the first time today.

I think that he would be the first to agree that it is not only our responsibility but also that of the Chair to consider whether, in the exercise of that responsibility, we can follow our immediate inclination, which would be to accept immediately his motion of reference. However, he has used the word "slanderous", which gives rise to the possibility of court proceedings. That is a question which I believe deserves examination. I am not certain whether or not the bankruptcy proceedings giving rise to the allegations to which he has referred are still ongoing or whether they have been concluded. There may be other investigations, we do not know.

● (1510)

Proceeding with that prudence and in the light of our practices and precedents, there may be an obligation on the part of the Chair to examine that motion and its acceptability. My suggestion to the House would be that we set over until tomorrow the consideration of this motion and, in the meantime, perhaps the Hon. Member would be good enough to provide us with a copy. Perhaps he would also be good enough to speak with me about the circumstances surrounding the areas of concern that I have and that we have with respect to the exercise of the proper responsibilities of Members in dealing, hopefully favourably, with his motion.