

Privilege—Mr. Fraser

Trudeau) about this matter. I presume he will be speaking to the Prime Minister about making a statement on motions—I hope he will speak to him in that light—which can be examined in detail following our procedure of questions relating to the formation of the ministry.

In the course of that conversation, I wonder if he could speak to the Prime Minister about explaining the fact that a couple of very important ministries, in terms of the future of the country and the policy of the government, are joined. I note that the Department of Science and Technology, for instance, is still joined with another ministry, now the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. That, coupled with the fact that National Revenue and Taxation is now joined with Small Business may indicate a bit of downgrading of those very important functions. I hope this will be dispelled in the statement of the Prime Minister.

I hope the Deputy Prime Minister will draw these matters to the attention of the Prime Minister, and I hope the Prime Minister will deal with them if he makes a statement on motions. I hope he will also deal with the very unfortunate question of what is going to happen to Central Mortgage and Housing, the National Capital Commission and a host of other commissions, and to whom they will be reporting. It was in that light that I directed a question today to the Minister of Labour (Mr. O'Connell). He is the closest to the national capital area. I do not know whether it is the intention of the government, but at the moment the national capital area and eastern Ontario have no minister in the House, and there has not been one for some time. Perhaps the Prime Minister will be able to justify this in his statement. This area, which has been represented since confederation, is not now represented in cabinet and has not been for some time.

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PRIVILEGE**ANSWER OF MINISTER OF STATE (ENVIRONMENT)**

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege which relates to comments made by the Minister of State (Environment) (Mr. Marchand) in an exchange that took place a few minutes ago.

In response to a question from my colleague, the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) the minister said that the proposition being put to him, that there was no agreement by industry in British Columbia to privatize the forest laboratory in Vancouver, was a lot of "bull".

● (1212)

The question is of very grave importance to British Columbia. It is my contention that it is appropriate, when a question of that importance is asked, when it has been well established and it is common knowledge to the public that privatization is not going ahead and the industry has not agreed to pick up this laboratory, that this House and hon.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

members ought not to be told by a minister of the government that it is just a lot of bull.

I would say that that is a point of privilege. If you hear me out, Mr. Speaker, I think that, through you, the minister, under the circumstances, is required not only to withdraw his remark but to explain in proper detail exactly what the situation is. What the minister said today in this House was that the information that is public is not correct and it is absolutely misleading, and I am sure the minister would not want deliberately to mislead this House.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I was rising on a point of order to comment on this matter, but there is a question of privilege. I think it is quite improper language to use in the House of Commons; only the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is permitted to use language like that.

An hon. Member: You use language like that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have the role of determining the question of whether or not improper language was used. The terms used by the minister this afternoon may be slang in their nature, but there is nothing improper in the language used by him. I think we can quickly set that aside. If the minister wants to make that comment on suggestions that have been made, it is his right to do so as long as he does it in parliamentary language.

As to whether the minister disagrees with the position taken, of course, that is a fundamental disagreement and not a matter of privilege. I would need to know that there was something to this question of privilege which relates to more than a disagreement between members.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I was setting out the question of language. The question of privilege concerns the use by the Minister of State (Environment) (Mr. Marchand) of assertions to the effect that he has assurances from private industry that they are prepared to take over that lab and also the centre in Ottawa. Those assurances must be borne out by documentary evidence.

I suggest that since the minister has suggested that he has been in correspondence—he has suggested, but he has not stated explicitly that he has been in correspondence—with these people, if there is correspondence to prove his point then it should be laid before the House.

Mr. Speaker: That may well be a very worth-while suggestion, but there is surely no procedural compulsion on the minister to do so and no vehicle by means of which the Chair could compel the minister, or any other minister, who had made that kind of reference and follow the matter with the tabling of any documents. I have not found any procedural significance in the statements made by the minister during this afternoon's question period. I have not found anything in the nature of a question of privilege. If the member feels that he has some new point to raise, I will hear him.