

Inquiries of the Ministry

Secretary of State for External Affairs. Has the minister any comment to make on the visit to Washington of his assistant under secretary, and the discussions held there on the future of NATO?

Hon. Paul Martin (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Basil Robinson, one of the assistant under secretaries of state, did go to Washington after the Brussels meeting of NATO ministers, for the purpose of continuing our discussion with the United States on NATO questions.

Mr. Johnston: A supplementary question. Is Canada being urged to strengthen its NATO forces in Europe in order to free United States forces for activity in Viet Nam?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVILEGE

MR. HOWARD—ALLEGED MISLEADING STATEMENT BY LABOUR MINISTER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I have a question of privilege with regard to which I have been trying to get the floor. My question of privilege relates to the bill introduced earlier today by the Minister of Labour. I submit that with the introduction of this bill, once we have discovered what its contents are, the minister is guilty of having misled the house on the 14th day of June—and I say deliberately misled the house—by the omission of certain pertinent information in his statement on that day.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena knows that he cannot accuse another member of deliberately misleading the house; that is against the rules.

Mr. Howard: Then, Mr. Speaker, if the word "deliberately" is offensive and contrary to the rules, I will confine my question of privilege to the minister having misled the house on June 14.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows the rules in this regard. There is a distinction, of course, between misleading the house and deliberately misleading the house. A minister or a member can unintentionally mislead the house, and I assume this is what the hon. member has in mind.

Mr. Howard: Yes. On June 14 the Minister of Labour, in making his announcement with

respect to the settlement of the longshoremen's strike, said that a commission would be established under and pursuant to the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act. He said that clearly and without any equivocation.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the hon. member's point, but I suggest to him that there is no question of privilege involved here. There may be a question for debate when the matter comes up for debate in the house, but I respectfully suggest to him that there is no question of privilege at this time.

Mr. Howard: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, Your Honour has not heard the key point as to whether or not there is a question of privilege here. On June 14 the minister told us one thing, and today he has run completely contrary to his former statement and has introduced a bill which provides within it, fully, the principle of compulsory arbitration. This is contrary to what he told the house on June 14, and I contend—if I have to revert to the expression—that he deliberately misled the house on June 14.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member cannot do that. He cannot revert to what he said previously. He knows that there is no question of privilege at all involved. There may be a subject for debate, as I said. Whenever the matter comes up for debate in the house he can at that time, if he wishes, argue this point; but I would seek his co-operation in agreeing with the Chair that at this time he cannot raise the matter as a question of privilege.

[Later:]

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I wish to address a question to the Minister of Labour arising out of the bill he introduced earlier, and ask him to tell the house whether he informed the union or the shipping federation at the time the settlement was reached of his intention to introduce compulsory arbitration of the issue of productivity, following the appointment of a commission of inquiry.

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): I most certainly did, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lewis: I wish to make sure of this. Did the minister inform both the union and the federation, or just one of those organizations?

Mr. Nicholson: Yes, both the unions and the federation were informed of the government's intention.