

Privilege—Mr. Ethier

record of *Hansard*, both my reply to his colleague, the hon. member for Laval-des-Rapides (Mrs. Sauvé), the other day when I indicated that the quotation he cited was an incorrect one, and also the answer I gave earlier today when I indicated that members of this party would be encouraged to campaign under the umbrella of the group opposing the position put forward in the white paper by the government of Quebec. If he reads the record, his subsequent contributions will be both more informed and more temperate.

Mr. Speaker: The House will know that we are in the area of a disagreement, not a matter of privilege.

[Translation]

MR. ETHIER—ALLEGED ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO POLITICAL GROUP—PUBLISHING REPORT IN ENGLISH ONLY

Mr. Denis Ethier (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is with some reluctance that I rise on a question of privilege today because it involves a good friend of every member of the House, the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) whom I believe to be sincere and conscientious.

My question of privilege concerns a press release published by the minister on October 19, 1979. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you will wonder why I did not raise the matter earlier. I will explain, but first of all I would like to quote from this press release:

For immediate release: Report of the Beef Import Consultative Committee, Ottawa, October 19, 1979. Agriculture Minister John Wise today announced that he has received the report of the Beef Import Consultative Committee and is studying it carefully.

The committee, made up of five members of Parliament under the chairmanship of Bert Hargrave (PC—

—I presume that this means Progressive Conservative—

—Medicine Hat), solicited briefs and held hearings to obtain the views of the private sector on beef import legislation.

More than 25 briefs were submitted by representatives of beef producers, packers, importers, consumers and foreign exporters.

Mr. Wise noted that the report would be of considerable help in developing beef import legislation.

The report includes a summary of the briefs received, a copy of the briefs in full, and the transcript of the public hearings.

"It provides an invaluable insight into the views of a good cross section of the groups and individuals who would be affected by beef import legislation," Mr. Wise said.

"I would like to commend the committee on carrying out its mandate in such a thorough manner."

Mr. Speaker, my office received that press release Wednesday, October 24 and realizing that it was about a committee report on a sector of farming industry which is rather important in my county, I asked my Liberal colleagues which member of my party had been invited to sit on that committee. I was amazed to learn that no member of the official opposition had been invited so I took the first opportunity to question the minister, which was on October 30 in the Standing Committee on Agriculture. According to the information I got in that committee I think I have no other solution but to present

[Mr. Clark.]

this case under the form of a question of privilege of which I gave you notice.

First, Mr. Speaker, the heading of that press release mentions a consultative committee and in the second paragraph it is said and I quote:

The committee, made up of five members of Parliament under the chairmanship of Bert Hargrave—

—as I said earlier—

—(PC—Medicine Hat)—

This release seems to give much importance to two specific words, the words "committee" and "report" as they are mentioned no fewer than nine times. I find them very important too, particularly the word committee as I think that according to the regular parliamentary terminology a committee is bipartite or made up of the group of persons representing different political parties. Except of course, if it is referred to as the caucus committee.

The word committee has been used in this release in a way that raises doubt in my mind and seems to imply to the reader that this committee was formed or made of members of various political parties.

This doubt disappeared when I questioned the minister in the Standing Committee on Agriculture. He advised me as well as the committee that the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave), the hon. member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Fraleigh), the hon. member for Cariboo-Chilcotin (Mr. Greenaway), the hon. member for Cardigan (Mr. MacDonald), and the hon. member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer), Progressive Conservative members all, were in fact the only five hon. members on this committee. Moreover, the minister recognized that he had authorized the spending of public funds for the preparation and publication of a caucus committee report, as well as made use of government facilities such as telephones, news releases, contacts and what have you, not to mention the services of public service employee Mike Gifford as secretary to this group of five people. And it is rightfully, indeed, that I am referring to a group of five people, because judging from the statement made by the chairman of this group, Mr. Bert Hargrave, the Progressive Conservative member for Medicine Hat, this is not at all the committee referred to in the news release.

As proof of what I am saying, I shall quote from the report part of what Mr. Hargrave stated, when the representatives of the Consumer Association of Canada appeared before this group of five people on September 21, 1979 in reply to a question from Mrs. Ruth Jackson, as reported on page 3:

[English]

And it is true we are a government caucus committee.

[Translation]

Properly defined, Mr. Speaker, that means a committee representing only one political party, namely the party of the