

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 17, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. EPP—ALLEGED CONFLICT BETWEEN STATEMENTS BY MINISTER AND PRIME MINISTER ON IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, notice of which I have given Your Honour. I put it forward on behalf of myself and every member of this House. My question of privilege stems from the practice of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) of continually making conflicting statements respecting release of the green paper on immigration.

● (1410)

As early as September 17, 1973, as recorded at page 6611 of *Hansard*, the minister made a statement on motions announcing the government's intention to invite briefs outlining the views of the provinces, the territorial governments, members of parliament and interested groups on matters relating to future Canadian immigration policy. This green paper on immigration was to be followed by a national conference on immigration population under the sponsorship of the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The end result of this procedure was forecast by the minister at page 6611 of *Hansard*, where he said:

The end result at which we are aiming is a comprehensive policy, to be expressed in new immigration legislation for submission to parliament.

As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, the operative words are "for submission to parliament". The target date, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 6611 and as expressed by the minister, was "next spring". That statement was made on September 17, 1973. In reply to a question which I put to the minister on October 2, in this thirtieth parliament, regarding publication of the green paper on immigration, the minister replied, as recorded at page 36 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I was so precise as to say it would be tabled in the spring; I expressed hope that we would have it by the summer, and this might have been the case but for the election which was concluded in July.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) asked the Prime Minister if a decision had been made regarding changes in immigration regulations, and the Prime Minister replied, as recorded at page 440 of *Hansard*: As to any interim measures taken before then, all I can say at this moment is if any announcement is to be made it will be made by the government in this House.

The ink was barely dry on yesterday's *Hansard* when the Minister of Manpower and Immigration made a statement on this question, not in this House, not even in this country but outside its borders, directly refuting the

words of the Prime Minister. In that statement the minister made it clear that the new immigration regulations and the legislation he was proposing would be non-discriminatory, would depend upon job availability, and the unification of separated families was not to be threatened.

In pointing this out, Mr. Speaker, I am not necessarily objecting to the proposed changes. This question is of interest to all Canadians and affects our future growth, the use of our natural resources and the type of country in which we will live, yet the Prime Minister and his government continue to ignore the rights of this House by making statements outside the House when in fact they have given assurances that such statements will be made inside the House.

I raise this question because it affects myself and every member of this House respecting our right to receive factual information from this government or, for that matter, from any other government. Mr. Speaker, if you find that I have a prima facie case of breach of privilege, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander):

That all matters pertaining to the Prime Minister's and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration's continuing practice of making conflicting statements both inside the House of Commons and outside the House of Commons respecting the release of the government's green paper on immigration be referred to the committee on privileges and elections for study and report.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member, as he said at the outset, gave the Chair notice of his intention to raise a question of privilege. The notice was sufficient to conform with the Standing Orders but, regrettably, it did not in any way inform the Chair of the nature and substance of the question of privilege to be raised. Accordingly, I am ruling at the moment on the basis of having glanced at it for the first time this very minute.

It is, of course, a matter of concern to hon. members whether statements made in the House of Commons, or outside, are correct. It is, indeed, a matter of great importance to the nation. However, while it may be a matter of great importance and validity, and while it may be a very valid matter for discussion and debate either inside or outside the chamber, the fact is that whatever disadvantage such question may bring to one side of the House, or advantage—in the political sense—to the other side of the House, when such occurrences do take place or are alleged to have taken place they do not, under my understanding of the rules of privilege of the House of Commons, constitute a prima facie case of privilege.

I say, again, that these may be matters of importance and concern and matters for discussion and debate as, indeed, all such questions are. But I cannot see that they are matters which affect, in the general sense, the ability of hon. members to function as members of parliament, or