

*Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act***PRIVILEGE**

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Speaker: I have a response to a question of privilege to deliver to the House.

[Translation]

On January 20 the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) complained about some of the terms used by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in answer to one of his questions.

[English]

I think it is important to look at part of what the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said in putting the question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He said:

Given the fact that the media as well as certain Members—

And *Hansard* has treated that as meaning Members of Parliament, and the Chair accepts that.

—and many Canadians have been at least partly aware of these transactions for two months already—

Then the Hon. Member went on to ask questions.

In the exchange which ensued, the Prime Minister in referring to the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said:

If he has had that information for some months why did he not bring it to the attention of the RCMP since his failure to do so could result in the obstruction of justice?

There are no hard and fast rules regarding parliamentary language, and it is usually a matter of judgment to determine whether or not language is unparliamentary. One of the important principles enshrined in our practice is that no charge may be levelled at an Hon. Member except by way of a substantive motion making a specific accusation. The Chair had reason to refer to that in the judgment which I just gave on the application pursuant to Standing Order 29. Such a motion requires notice, and is debatable and votable. The reason for that, of course, is to protect Hon. Members from attacks on their integrity and their conduct during the course of debate in Question Period, or in any other proceeding, without defining and putting a charge.

In considering the complaint of the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the Chair must determine whether the words complained of constitute a charge against the Hon. Member. He asserts that the Prime Minister in using the words which I quoted in effect used threatening language and by inference accused him of committing a criminal act. The Chair might also read into that: accused him perhaps of not doing something that he ought to have done.

Certainly that is the way the Hon. Member received the language. As I said the other day, the Hon. Member immediately brought his complaint to the Chair and then argued the matter a day or so ago.

At that time I complimented the Hon. Member and other Members for the exact and succinct and careful arguments that Hon. Members presented to the Chair.

[Translation]

These remarks ask a question and conditionally infer that a possible omission might result in obstruction of justice. The words of the Prime Minister clearly imply criticism, but the Chair cannot interpret that as an indication of threat or accusation.

[English]

However, it is clear that the words offended, and sometimes in this Chamber they do, but it is the view of the Chair that they fall short of the kind of threat of which the Hon. Member was complaining.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to Hon. Members to avoid the use of provocative language. Many things are said in this House which, while not necessarily unparliamentary, are nevertheless felt to be objectionable. A great deal of time is consumed in the raising of complaints about the use of language which gives offence. Moderate language is not inconsistent with strong criticism, and if there were fewer complaints there would be more time for debate. I believe the interest of the House is best served when Hon. Members observe moderation in their choice of words and expressions.

I thank Hon. Members who rose on this matter, and I hope the Hon. Member will feel that his complaint has received serious consideration by the Chair.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRODUCTS EXPORT CHARGE ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Miss Carney that Bill C-37, an Act respecting the imposition of a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee, and the amendment of Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra), (p. 2382).

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, since the amendment has not been read by the Clerk, I will do so for the record:

That Bill C-37, an Act respecting the imposition of a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to explain that the Official Opposition recommends that the adoption of this Bill be deferred for six months so that all Canadians can properly understand what this Government has signed, what kind of