

last two days relating to the issues raised by the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham (Mr. Lawrence). In particular I would refer to media reports today of those events which unfortunately serve to perpetuate two erroneous points. There has been an enormous amount of rhetoric on these issues in this House this week and some genuine disagreement with respect to the substance of the issues, but on the two particular points that I want to refer to this afternoon I do not believe there is any question of disagreement in the House as to the proper interpretation to be given to those points—no disagreement on this side, no disagreement with the Chair, and as far as I know no disagreement even from the opposition. Yet these two areas continue to be misrepresented or commented upon in the media in a fashion which clearly leaves a wrong public impression in a way I fear may affect privileges of members.

The two specific points are these: first, a misinterpretation of the meaning of your ruling on a *prima facie* case of privilege to be put to the House; second, the inference that an hon. member was deliberately misled by a minister or by the government.

To show the problem, Mr. Speaker, I would simply refer to one media report. There may well have been others, but I refer to one specifically which was carried by the CBC. It was a CBC news report on a program called "The World at Eight" carried across Canada this morning. I have a complete transcript of the newscast before me now. I will not take the time of the House to read it all, but the parts which I think are questionable I will refer to in due course. The second item on this program purported to report on the events in this House over the last two days. With reference to the first of the points I mentioned a moment ago, the CBC broadcast began with a headline at the beginning of that program claiming that for the last two days the House had been debating something called "ministerial privilege." I believe that is a concept which is totally unknown to constitutional lawyers or political scientists, and certainly not one that was before the House on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to restrict unduly the hon. member, but surely he does not expect me now to allow him to criticize the quality of broadcasts unless he has some specific point. Even yesterday when I was at pains to say that I was dismayed by the inaccuracy of reports, in my own decision I indicated even then that I did not think it had procedural significance. I simply put it on the record because I think we were all rather surprised by the misinterpretation. If the hon. member has a separate point from what I said yesterday and one that clearly relates to a question of privilege, it will have to be something more than a criticism of the quality of reporting.

Mr. Goodale: No, Mr. Speaker, I think I have a point that will meet the requirements that you have just made. If it does not, I would welcome your advice with respect to it. To get to the substance beyond the headline, the CBC said that it is—and I quote from the transcript:

—unusual for the House to overturn a decision of the Speaker.

Social Insurance Numbers

Those were the words used on the program this morning. In its vote last night, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the House did no such thing, and that point is absolutely clear.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Now you are in breach of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I will give the hon. member an opportunity another time. Yesterday I said I would try to be careful not to draw conclusions respecting these things. We have to be very careful where we are dealing with areas of opinion. We have to be very careful in this House to make sure that we do not in any way even appear to interfere with journalists. As long as the matter is left in the area of opinion I do not think the matter should be touched by this House. In a situation in which there are factual inaccuracies, not differences of opinion, I think they should be addressed by the House. That is what I was attempting to do yesterday.

If the hon. member wants to raise this again, I will be glad to hear from him, but I think that matter has been dealt with rather thoroughly. But unless there is a clear factual transgression, which I am sure he would have mentioned by now, to get into differences of opinion as to whether or not the rarity of the House in deciding one way when the Chair has decided another is something I do not think we can launch upon on a question of privilege, particularly since we have just had two days of debate and a vote last night on the subject matter to which the hon. member addresses himself. Therefore with regret, I think I will have to go on to orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—GUIDELINES RESPECTING USE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBERS

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar) moved:

That this House, concerned by the threats to personal privacy posed by the Government's violation of its commitment to confine the use of the social insurance number to social security programs, accepts the recommendation of the Task Force on Privacy and Computers in 1972 that a single identifying number for individuals should not be adopted, directly or indirectly, without a full prior examination and public debate of its consequences, and calls upon the government to immediately introduce legislation establishing guidelines and limitations upon the use of the social insurance number or other identification numbers in order to protect Canadians against threats to personal privacy.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I was going to extemporize at some length today, but in view of the truncated nature of this debate I will follow my notes fairly closely so that I can put on the record some important and I think germane observations and recommendations with respect to this important issue.

In 1974, Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina opened the United States Senate hearings on privacy legislation with these words: