

Point of Order—Mr. Epp

table the correspondence, as shown in the official record to which you referred today.

Of course, Members opposite will say that they would not have made this challenge if the Minister of Finance had not referred to the correspondence. However, that is not the point at issue. The point is that, if Hon. Members want to speak about honour, the Minister of Finance had the courtesy to apologize and this should satisfy them. However, in spite of this apology, they deemed it appropriate to raise a legal issue under a point of order.

I am therefore basing my argument on the rules and on the legal issues, and what I am saying is that the Members opposite were the ones who challenged the Minister of Finance by asking him to table the correspondence.

Second, the Minister of Finance mentioned these facts: he met with the Leader of the Opposition before tabling the documents; at his request, the Minister showed him the correspondence and waited for him to be at his place before tabling the correspondence, to which he did not object. This is another fact which tends to show that even if consent had been required, this consent was implicit since the Minister was challenged by the Opposition, gave notice to the Leader of the Opposition, showed him the correspondence beforehand and waited for him to be in the House before tabling this correspondence, which he did also at the request of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans).

Now, what remedy can there be? Even if we presume that the point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Provencher could be genuine, what more could be asked for? The Minister has replied unequivocally to a question. He said that he realized with regret that the letter did not reflect what he had been told and he apologized something which of course he did not have to do to properly settle the matter, but which in my view was a very proper and parliamentary thing to do. I feel, therefore, that the opposition has not made its point and that it has no argument to support its claim that the Minister had no right to table these documents. Personally, I feel that the references I have made to our Standing Order and procedures fully establish that the Minister had the right to table without notice and without consent these documents because of their very nature, and thirdly that the consent, under these circumstances, was implied because it was the Leader of the Opposition and his House leader who had challenged the Minister into tabling these letters, and because these letters had been shown to the interested party who was present and did not object to the tabling of these letters by the Minister.

In closing, I should like to remind Hon. Members who are shocked easily that as far as letters are concerned, the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) has raised the interesting issue whether we should have more definite regulations. I suggest that if ever a reference is made to a committee of the House, either during this or any other Parliament, the said committee can to address the issue; for those who are

interested in these issues, I should like to emphasize that it was the Leader of the Opposition, together with his House leader, who first made reference to a letter written by Mr. Mulroney, Leader of the Opposition, to our Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and who were the first to call the attention of the House to this correspondence between the Leader of the Opposition and a Minister of the Crown and who were happy to put it on the record. They should not be so easily shocked, for they started the whole thing and never apologized for it.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has heard four statements. It will certainly not render a decision today. I invite subsequent Hon. Members to be as brief as possible.

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I shall try to be brief. But I would submit for Your Honour that this is probably the most important point of order that will come before you. I know Your Honour is looking at it in that light by the attentive way you are listening to the arguments presented during the course of this debate.

We have heard two new elements come into this matter this afternoon. We were not being ungracious in not accepting what appeared to be the very gracious apology of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde). He did stand on the floor of the House today and apologized.

Mr. Nielsen: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: But in the same breath he then compounded the initial act by referring to a conversation that is purported to have taken place on January 25, 1983 between the Deputy Minister of Finance and the then President of the Iron Ore Company of Canada—

Mr. Nielsen: Shame!

Mr. McGrath:—presumably, to support a charge that he made on the floor of the House of Commons based on evidence that he could not produce to the House subsequently when he produced the correspondence. It is a very serious charge. The charge states that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Mulroney) as President of the Iron Ore Company of Canada was making representations for the rich and a deal which would have benefited him rather than the unemployed. That, Sir, is a serious charge.

Mr. Nielsen: On what page is that found?

Mr. McGrath: That is found at page 693 of *Hansard*. I intend to submit that that charge, notwithstanding the intervention of the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard), is a breach of Standing Order 39 of this House. I did not hear the President of the Privy Council once during his tabling of documents. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that you have to look at parliamentary privilege and the immunity that Members of the House enjoy in the context of the provisions of the