

Privilege—Mr. Jelinek

the FBI has been aware of the petroleum PCB fraud for a number of years.

In that regard, we would like more information, specifically from this Minister and also from the Government, over repeated statements over the last number of days that it knew nothing about it from the period before Monday. Then we heard that it knew something as of March. Then there were suggestions that it might have known something earlier on. Now, by the letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister of the former Minister of Revenue, the Government itself is allegedly involved in a major investigation involving contact with international authorities.

I think the only way to resolve this matter is to have the whole issue referred to a standing committee of the House of Commons so that we can have the former Minister brought before the committee, who, according to my information, was apparently intimately involved with not only the discussions that were taking place but also a police informant who directly notified the Ministry of Revenue about the possibility of PCBs being mixed in with fuel oil, and that fuel oil being imported into Canada.

According to our sources, that information was provided in 1987 to the Ministry of Revenue. Obviously, for that information to remain silent and secret for a year and a half, or possibly up to two years, is completely unacceptable.

The only way to clear the air on this whole matter is to set aside the tissue of contradictions that we have seen between the Minister of State for Transport (Mrs. Martin), the Minister for the Environment (Mr. Bouchard) and the Minister of Revenue (Mr. Jelinek), and have the whole—

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the Hon. Member. The Hon. Minister has risen on what I suppose could be called a point of personal privilege to try to deal with a statement made yesterday in view of information, as he has told us, he has received since. I have, and I think quite properly, recognized the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) who is the critic on these matters for the Official Opposition and I have very deliberately allowed her to make a response.

However, obviously the Hon. Member has more to say on this issue, but I think it properly should be pursued perhaps later on today.

I do take the matter seriously and I hope the Hon. Member will not feel I have unfairly interfered with her intervention. The Hon. Minister may now want to say something and I certainly will recognize him.

Mr. Jelinek: Mr. Speaker, I have to set the record straight because the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) is talking about something totally unassociated—

An Hon. Member: That is debate.

Mr. Jelinek: —with contaminated fuel. She is talking about—I am responding to the Member for Hamilton East. She is talking about an ongoing investigation between the Government of Canada, Revenue Canada, the Provinces of Québec and Ontario in respect to tax evasion of fuels coming in and out of Canada. I made reference to that in my answer yesterday and said that it is an ongoing process. There is no secret about that.

We are, as a government and as a department, working very actively with the Provinces of Québec and Ontario in taking every step that we can possibly take in exchange of information, in spot checks and extended spot checks, to make certain that we eliminate the extent of tax fraud that had been taking place in the past. But there is absolutely no connection to the point that I was making reference to about contaminated fuels.

Mr. Gauthier: A point of order.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: Why don't you let him finish.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier on a point of order.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is now engaging in debate. If he is into damage control—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier is of course correct. This is becoming a debate, and it probably is my error in allowing it to be so. But I think I appropriately gave to the Hon. Member for Hamilton East considerable latitude in responding to the Minister. The Minister has now responded. I accept what the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier says, that this is now moving into debate and should properly be pursued, as I said a few minutes ago, in another place. I see that the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent) is seeking the floor. I will hear him briefly.