

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 7, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. TRUDEAU—CLARIFICATION OF ANSWER RESPECTING CORRESPONDENCE FROM MEMBERS OF ROYAL COMMISSION ON BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this first opportunity to rise on a question of privilege to clarify an answer I gave in the House yesterday on the subject of correspondence from members of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. At page 4946 in *Hansard* I reported that there was no further exchange of correspondence beyond that already tabled by myself in the House on March 17. This correspondence consisted of letters to me from the co-chairmen of the commission dated March 1 and a reply which I sent to them on March 11.

In giving my answer yesterday I was doing so with particular reference to questions from the hon. member for York South who wished me to consider tabling any correspondence relating to the conclusion of the work of the commission which was exchanged between one or both of the joint chairmen and myself or any other minister of the Crown.

On April 5, at page 4898 of *Hansard*, the hon. member said:

I am interested particularly if there is correspondence which sets out the reasons the commission decided not to produce its final report—all that kind of thing—so that all the information may be before Parliament and the people.

I repeat today that the correspondence tabled on March 17 contained the only letters I personally have received concerning the reasons for the decision of the commission not to proceed with its final report.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Peace River asked if I had received a letter from Professor J. B. Rudnyckyj, who was a member of the commission. I indicated I was not aware of such a letter but would look into it and see whether it had been received and might be tabled. I have received this letter and at the appropriate time in the proceedings, perhaps in motions, will be pleased to table it.

I should like to point out to hon. members that Professor Rudnyckyj wrote his letter to me on March 16, several days after the exchange of correspondence between myself and the co-chairmen of the commission. His letter was postmarked March 26, received by my office on March 30 and acknowledged on April 2. I first became aware of it when it was drawn to my attention by the hon. member for Peace River and later by my office.

Mr. Baldwin: I am always glad to oblige, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAIASZ—WORLD HEALTH DAY—FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF DISCOVERY OF INSULIN

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parkdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I would like to bring to the attention of all hon. members that today is world health day and its theme is "a full life despite diabetes". In 1921 Frederick Banting and Charles Best discovered insulin at the University of Toronto. Today the World Health Organization is commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of this great medical discovery which has brought improved health and extended life for many diabetics and also provided a great stimulus to medical research. On this occasion while we pay tribute to Banting, Best and their collaborators in their efforts to conquer diabetes, I express the hope that Canadians will increase their support for medical research.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I realize the importance of the statement made by the hon. member but may I suggest at this point, without reflecting in any way on the substance of the comments made by the hon. member for Parkdale, that the reading of such statements is highly irregular. Even when an hon. member gives to the Chair notice of his intention to raise a question of privilege, it is difficult for the Chair to determine whether there is a valid question of privilege. The statement, of course, has nothing to do with privilege. I suggest to hon. members that it is not proper to make that kind of comment at the opening of the proceedings of the House.

MR. SKOBERG—SAFETY OF RAIL OPERATIONS IN FRASER VALLEY

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, in rising on this point of utmost urgency and privilege I should like to point out that last September the Railway Transport Committee of the Canadian Transport Commission established a public inquiry to look into the causes and circumstances surrounding accidents on Canadian railways. Because of the heavy workload of the commissioners, delays have occurred in the hearings. The next sitting will not be until May, which delay can only contribute to an explosive issue. Mr. Speaker, slowdowns and work stoppages in rail operations have occurred in the mountain regions and are largely attributable to unsafe conditions in the Fraser Valley. Actually, the bodies of the three crew members lost in the accident some time ago have still not been recovered from the Fraser River.

Further railway mishaps of the kind that occurred on Monday can only result in family tragedies, discontent and militant action by the rank and file of all railway operating personnel. This can only result in a disruption