

Privilege—Mr. Langdon

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The Hon. Member is trying to achieve that result now by an indirect means. Obviously if the matter were referred to a committee the question might arise requiring the Government of Canada to reveal to the committee our position in the negotiations with the U.S. That would achieve the NDP purpose of subverting the negotiations and would not be in the interests of the House, in my judgment.

My understanding of the rules of this place is that one cannot attribute to Members of the House of Commons a deliberate attempt to mislead. I am not sure if it is deliberate. I have not made that accusation. What I can say, Sir, knowing the facts, is that statements have been repeatedly made this week by the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) and other Members of the House of Commons that are false. If I did not describe them as false Canadians might believe they are true. They are not true. I should not be prevented by the rules of the House of Commons from letting Canadians know that statements that are made which they might accept as true are in fact false.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) has raised a very useful point for you to consider. I suppose you might well be advised that technically we are dealing with a point of order rather than a question of privilege. However, that is not really the question.

The question is whether the language used by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) is unparliamentary and has to be withdrawn. Frankly, there is evidence to support the argument of the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor and the Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan) that the language used by the Minister is unparliamentary. For example, if you look in Beauchesne's it lists words which have been found to be parliamentary and words which have been found to be unparliamentary. You will see on page 107 that apparently a Speaker ruled on December 3, 1976, at page 1640 of *Hansard* that the word "falsehood" is unparliamentary. However, to be fair, I have to say there is also a ruling in the other direction, about the same period of time.

Therefore, I invite you to carefully review what was said by the Minister and look at the precedents, including this one at page 114, Citation 324:

(1) It is impossible to lay down any specific rules in regard to injurious reflections uttered in debate against particular Members, or to declare beforehand what expressions are or are not contrary to order; much depends upon the tone and manner, and intention, of the person speaking; sometimes upon the person to whom the words are addressed—

And so on.

What I am getting at is that, despite the precedents in question, and even though details have not been set out in Beauchesne's but they are there to be looked at, the matter is not closed. It is open to you to examine the words used by the Minister, not only in light of the precedents based on rulings of your distinguished predecessors but in light of the circumstances. I respectfully submit that, in looking at the context in which the Minister used the word "falsehood", looking at his

tone and manner and the other criteria set out in Beauchesne's, it is open to you to find that what the Minister said when he used the word "falsehood" was in fact unparliamentary.

Mr. Doug Lewis (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, just briefly, because I think the point has been made by our side, I would first suggest that the Speaker was following Question Period closely. The evidence of that is that he did interrupt another Hon. Member who was putting a question to remind him to be careful about the subject matter of the question. It should be pointed out that the Speaker, who was following the questions closely, at no time interrupted the Hon. Minister and suggested there was anything unparliamentary in what was said.

I appreciate the House Leader for the Official Opposition bringing forward the fact that the word "falsehood" has been found parliamentary and unparliamentary. That leads me to my next point, which is that in seeking to bring a point of order or a question of privilege my friend from Essex—Windsor was in no way specific about any one phrase or any one sentence which he wishes to use as the foundation for his charge that something is unparliamentary or a question of privilege. Surely one cannot say that all the answers of the Minister today were unparliamentary because they suggested falsehoods. If one wants to lay charges as serious as these one has to be specific and exact in the charge he is trying to make. I think it fails both as a point of order and as a question of privilege.

● (1220)

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that I did not raise this as a point of order with regard to the question of parliamentary language only, but with regard to the fact that the Minister, at least twice and possibly three times—I will have to check the "blues" to be sure of that—accused me specifically of uttering falsehoods. That seems to me a very clear-cut accusation. If those accusations are to be permitted in the House in the future I think it will take us to a new level of disrespect—

Mr. Lewis: You're already there.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): That works both ways.

Mr. Langdon: —on both sides of the House.

Mr. Mazankowski: You had better look at yourself first.

Mr. Langdon: It will be something we will all live to regret. I think, therefore, that the accusations which have been put quite clearly should be referred to the appropriate committee and that the Minister should be required to justify his statement that I was uttering falsehoods by being brought before that committee and forced to document exactly that which was supposed to be a falsehood which was uttered, unlike, for instance, the very clear statement by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) yesterday with respect to my city which was completely inaccurate.