

and answered. The very important matter of confidentiality and responsibility in our system of government involving not only the member for Kenora-Rainy River but also the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) is at issue.

If Your Honour should rule that I have a prima facie case for a question of privilege, I would move:

That charges relating to the release of confidential information concerning tax changes as set out in the *Montreal Gazette* of July 24 and July 25, 1975, and statements made in relation thereto in the House of Commons on the same two days, be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, that the said committee be instructed to call the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Jacques Hamilton, officials of government departments with whom the member for Kenora-Rainy River is alleged to have had conversations concerning tax changes, and any other persons alleged to have had prior knowledge of forthcoming tax changes, and that the committee be authorized to sit during any recess of the House of Commons.

Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay): Mr. Speaker, in proceedings yesterday the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) quoted comments of mine in part that appeared in the *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, issue No. 12 of Thursday, March 6, 1975. Reference was made to those comments again today, and the hon. member rather graciously refused to name the source of them. I would not want an impression left that there was any wish on my part to shelter under a cloak of secrecy nor any reason why there should be. In order to set the record straight, I should like to quote the entire paragraph referred to by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr. Speaker, I might say that in what the *Gazette* called an unabridged but edited version of what happened in the House yesterday there was an unfortunate abridgement which left the impression with any reader of that page that my remarks had actually come from the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston: I know the hon. member is loquacious enough that he does not need any help from me in this regard, but this is what has been said, and it was in reference to what I think all members at the time assumed was a hypothetical case. I said:

I am just surprised at how wide the thing is being cast in the example that our witness from Kenora-Rainy River has given us, the particular example that he took. Much of what is involved in this whole business of conflict of interest is how the public sees it and interprets it. I for one on that very precise example said to various people, the Minister is going to withdraw this excise tax provision. And I had no confidential information whatsoever. It was just a good guess on my part, an intuition. I have no stock in any small boat company of any kind, nor did I rush out to purchase any following my statements. But I have no way of knowing whether some of the people who were petitioning me, as you suggested, immediately went out and altered their course of action and when my words turned out to be prophetic, again, I would have no way of knowing. But if anybody did I would hate to think I somehow was now in conflict of interest, or presumed to be, or seemed to be in conflict of interest, simply because I was a bit intuitive.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same matter but a different aspect. As a

Privilege

private member of this House, I should like to raise a question of privilege. Yesterday and today at various points in his remarks and answers, the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid), by direct reference, implication or inference lumped other members of parliament in with himself in terms of representations on the issue of the tax on motors and boats. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that by implication, inference and direct statement he implied that other members of parliament had advance information and knew that such a tax change was going to occur before it did occur.

On December 9, 1974, I wrote to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and made a submission on behalf of three people who had written to me representing two different companies in my constituency. I asked the minister if he would give consideration to exempting the sales tax for people living in remote areas. The minister replied on January 13, and I will quote the meat of his letter as follows:

I have noted your concern related to the impact of the proposed tax on persons living in remote areas. You may be assured that this matter will be reviewed prior to parliament's final consideration of the proposed legislation to implement the special excise tax.

That is all the information I was able to elicit from the minister—the minister only, and from nobody else. I feel, Mr. Speaker, in the context of the issue you are deciding as a matter of privilege, that by inference, implication and direct statement other members of parliament are included in this matter of prior knowledge.

I also feel there is a question of privilege involved in the manner in which the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River replied to the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) today, saying in effect that if members of the New Democratic Party did not know of this in advance, by implication they were not doing their job. Mr. Speaker, we made the normal recommendations that other members of parliament made. The hon. member also implied, I submit, that we had advance information, and that if we did not have it we were not doing our job. To add to the injury for other members of this House, as my leader reported to Your Honour earlier today the *Montreal Gazette* in an editorial today reports:

Mr. Reid has confirmed to us he told our reporter, "We put on a lobby and we knew about six weeks before it was announced that it was coming off the boats but not the motors."

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that "we knew" implies that he and other members of parliament knew. I sure as hell did not know, and the Minister of Finance quite rightly made sure I did not know and indicated that in his letter of January 13. I think the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River should rise in this House and make it abundantly clear that this involves him and him only, and no other member of this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benjamin: If he has any reason to think otherwise, he had better damned well say so and he had better say it now. That is my question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Dealing with the easy part first, perhaps, the alleged question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin)