

Privilege—Mr. W. Baker

fact that he said he would. I took it, and I think the House took it, that he would be making a statement in the House when matters were definitive. In any event, I think members are entitled to a statement from him. I would hope that we could wait for just a few moments for a statement from the minister here in the House so that we could question him and have a number of things cleared up now. It is clear that a wrong impression has been left with regard to the outcome of these negotiations, by either the President of the Treasury Board or by the president of the Public Service Alliance, perhaps by both in good faith, but I think the House is entitled to have the releases explained, and I hope the minister will comply with what I believe to be a reasonable request.

Mr. Nielsen: And members should know this, before the press.

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, may I say, in reply to the first part of the question of privilege, that the hon. member has referred to *Hansard* of October 6, 1980, and I remember the exchange very well. He asked me, and again I will quote as he has done:

Because of the importance of this meeting—

That meeting was taking place, you might recall, Madam Speaker, at four o'clock in the afternoon of October 6.

—would the minister undertake to return to the House when the day's work is over, if that day's work is definitive, and make a statement to the House in respect of the results of that meeting and their impact on the work stoppage in the public service?

When that question was put to me, I replied that if we did reach agreement during that negotiating session, I would be very pleased to return and to advise the House.

As matters turned out, I would dearly have loved to have returned and advised the House, but as hon. members might well know, negotiations continued through the night without interruption, continued all day yesterday without interruption, and an agreement was finally signed late last night.

Mr. Nielsen: Tell us about it.

Mr. Johnston: It seems to me, Madam Speaker, that I gave hon. members every opportunity and did advise them in response to the questions put to me by the hon. member for York-Peel. I regret if I have in any way misinterpreted the question which has been put to me by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker), but I do feel that I have fulfilled my obligation to him in advising the House. I can assure him that had an agreement been reached on that Monday, I indeed would have returned to the House and, in one form or another, would have advised the House of the agreement.

With respect to the second part of the question, the hon. member has me somewhat at a disadvantage because I have not seen any statements issued by the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I have simply advised the House, in my response to questions from the other side, initially in response to questioning from the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens) and subsequently in response to questions from the Right Hon.

Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), that a special procedure had been established to review the discipline which is to be applied by various departments in respect of illegal activities carried on during the course of the strike. That answer does not change.

● (1510)

If the president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada interprets that as a freeze, then perhaps he is entitled to do so. In other words, there was a certain appeal procedure established, and until that appeal procedure is carried forward and until the individual circumstances of each case are examined, I suppose one would be entitled to say that at least there is a suspension of the application of the penalty. But there is no question that the line I have taken is hard and is intended to be hard.

I hope the hon. member who put the question to me shares my belief, and the belief of the government, that it is essential our collective bargaining agreement be honoured, that we not place the people of Canada in a position where they can be held hostage by illegal activities carried on by various unions that do so on the assumption that they will be relieved from the penalties attached to those illegal activities. I stand firm on that, and the government stands firm on it. I hope I have the support of all members of the House in supporting that kind of an approach and that policy.

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same question of privilege. I should like to comment on both aspects of my colleague's question of privilege, the first being the clear undertaking given by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) to make a statement in this House. I would only suggest that the President of the Treasury Board has acknowledged that there may have been a misunderstanding, and I think he said that he was sorry for that. He can rectify that very quickly. He can rectify it, not by walking out of the House, but by making a statement now. It does not have to take too long. We have yet to reach motions in the orders of the day. If the President of the Treasury Board wishes to be co-operative with the House and wishes to live up to the undertaking he gave, he can make a statement in the House.

I should like to refer to the words of my colleague, which read as follows:

—and make a statement to the House in respect of the results of that meeting and their impact on the work stoppage in the public service?

As is agreed, the President of the Treasury Board came back and said:

—I would be very pleased to return to the House and advise the House.

This was providing there was an agreement on that day, the next day, or a week away. Essentially, the understanding was that if there was an agreement he would be pleased to come back and advise the House, as was requested by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker).

On the second point, I thought I would be helpful in saying that as there is an obvious difference in the reading of what