

collection of information concerning the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. A great deal of preparation had clearly gone into the Hon. Member's submission.

The Hon. Member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) stated during his intervention that there was no dispute about the facts. What was in question was the interpretation. I believe that this accurately sums up the situation. The Chair must consider the facts which are before it.

What we do know for certain is that among the files maintained in the Prime Minister's Office is one concerning the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. We know that certain employees of the Prime Minister's Office have collected information concerning the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition which is in the public domain. This information, as far as can be determined, is freely available to anybody prepared to go to the trouble and expense of seeking it. There is no evidence that the file on the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition contains anything other than press clippings and other information available to the public. There is no evidence that anything on the file was illegally obtained or that it was the kind of information to which public access would be restricted.

Another fact before us is a newspaper article published in *The Globe and Mail* on February 15 which made certain allegations which can be summed up in the opening paragraph:

The Prime Minister's Office employed two people at taxpayers' expense for covert intelligence gathering aimed at finding embarrassing information on the business background of Conservative Leader Brian Mulroney.

A number of questions were based upon this article and the allegations were unequivocally denied by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) when answering those questions. Because of the seriousness of this matter I think I should quote from some of these answers.

In answer to a question by the Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead (Mr. Clark) alleging that a covert operation had been mounted by officials of the Prime Minister's Office, the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister said as reported at page 1408 of *Hansard*:

That is quite untrue, and quite false. There was no such covert intelligence operation conducted by the Prime Minister's Office into the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition and into his background before he entered public life. There was no such covert operation, and I deny it completely.

In answer to a question by the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister said at page 1409 of *Hansard*:

There was no investigation into the personal conduct, nor would I condone if it were ever brought to my attention any such investigation into the conduct of the Leader of the Opposition.

Answering a question from the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), he said at page 1410 of *Hansard*:

Mr. Speaker, on the first point I want to assure the Leader of the NDP that this particular research exercise had nothing to do with the private life of the Leader of the Opposition.

In answer to a question from the Hon. Member for Rosedale, he said at page 1411 of *Hansard*:

I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I would condemn as being totally without justification any such investigation by the Government into the private life of

Privilege—Mr. Cooper

any Member of Parliament. That is for the police if they want to do it, but not for us.

And finally, in answer to the Hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Speyer), he stated at page 1413 of *Hansard*:

There is no investigation whatsoever into the personal lives of Members of Parliament.

We therefore have a situation where a newspaper has made certain allegations and a member of the Government has categorically denied them. This is hardly the basis for a question of privilege. We are bound to take the word of the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister that there is no foundation to the allegations made.

I would refer the House to Citation 19(1) in *Beauchesne's Fifth Edition*:

A dispute arising between two members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

Finally, I would emphasize the the essence of a breach of privilege of the kind alleged by the Hon. Member for Yukon lies in the obstruction or hindrance suffered by a Member of Parliament in the fulfilment of his duties. There has been no evidence of any such impediment in any of the exchanges which have taken place in this House. Members have freely made statements, asked questions, expressed their views and attacked the Government without any inhibitions. As I said in the course of an earlier ruling, we have seen Parliament in the full exercise of its privileges.

On the basis of the evidence before it, the Chair is unable to find that a prima facie case of privilege has been established.

MR. COOPER—ALLEGED INTIMIDATION BY CANADA POST OFFICIAL—RULING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised by the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) on February 6. Before doing so, may I appeal to all Hon. Members, when giving notice of a question of privilege, to assist the Chair by indicating in the notice the nature of the complaint they wish to raise.

I should first like to state a general principle which is a key factor in this case. There is no question that any attempt to threaten, intimidate or bribe a Member with a view to influencing his or her conduct in the House or in one of its committees is a breach of privilege. This is so fundamental that it hardly seems necessary to quote from the authorities. However, in support of this principle I would refer to pages 156 to 158 of *Erskine May's Twentieth Edition* and to Citations 67 and 74 of *Beauchesne's Fifth Edition*.

The Hon. Member in his submission stated that an official of Canada Post Corporation telephoned his office and, in a conversation with a member of his staff, attempted to influence his actions in the House of Commons by way of threats and insults. Specifically the Hon. Member asserted that the official threatened to withhold co-operation concerning the operations of the Corporation unless questions to be asked in the House concerning the Corporation were first cleared with