

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 6, 1975

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PRIVILEGE

MR. ORLIKOW—ALLEGED INCORRECT ANSWER GIVEN TO QUESTION ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning the answer I received on November 18, 1974, to question No. 481 on the order paper. The answer tabled by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Campbell) was:

No payments in excess of \$100 were made by the group to any individual among the participants or directors of the project.

In a letter to Mr. James Elliott, of Ajax, Ontario, dated January 24, 1975, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare listed a payment of \$3,900 to Mr. J. Forester and a payment of \$1,885 to Mr. R. Rathburn. Since both these individuals participated in the project, the answer to question 481 appears to have been totally incorrect. Further, the payment of \$3,900 to Mr. J. Forester constituted a clear conflict of interest situation. Mr. Forester began to receive these moneys while employed as a special assistant to the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik). He continued to receive payments while serving as publicity director during the election campaign. The question of the use of political influence for financial gain in this instance warrants investigation. The incorrect answer to question 481 is a serious infringement upon the right of a member of this House to obtain accurate information regarding government expenditures. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you direct that a correct answer be given to my question.

● (1410)

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I was not given notice that this question of privilege would be brought forward, and I did not hear all the hon. member's comments at the beginning of his remarks. However, the hon. member suggested that a man by the name of Forester from my riding was in the employ, I gather, of the Department of National Health and Welfare during the last election. That is not true and never has been true. Actually, a man by the name of Forester was a volunteer worker for me in a full-time capacity during the last election. For this he received no payment from the House of Commons or the Department of National Health and Welfare. If I am allowed to do so under the rules, in order that I may first read the com-

ments of the hon. member I would reserve my option to speak further on this question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Having heard equal contributions on what is essentially a non-question of privilege, let me point out to the hon. member who asked the Chair to direct that a correct answer be given, that the citations—as I know that he knows—indicate that the incorrectness of an answer does not give rise to a question of privilege. Besides, even if I could find a way to be sure that I have authority to direct that answers be made and to determine their correctness, I would have difficulty in enforcing such authority. The hon. member has not called for any action, as I am sure he is aware, which the Chair can take at this time.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE TO PERMIT MINISTER OF ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES TO MAKE STATEMENT TODAY

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, yesterday at about the present stage of our proceedings I made the proposal that at eight o'clock tonight the House might provide a special opportunity to hear the statement which my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) intends to make on energy conservation; that is, a much longer than ordinary opportunity in order that the spokesmen for the various parties may reply to the statement, and also to provide an opportunity for some questioning of the minister.

When I suggested such a motion yesterday, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker), the acting House leader for the opposition party, said he would like an opportunity to study the motion before it was put. He has done so and now, I hope, there will be agreement to an order in the following terms: That at 8 p.m., tonight, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources shall make a statement, and after the said statement a spokesman for each of the parties in opposition shall comment upon the statement, and after the comments of the said spokesmen members may question the minister on the said statement until the ordinary hour of adjournment.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I thank the government House leader for the assurances he has given me, and we are agreeable to the motion as put.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we agreed to this arrangement some days ago and we are happy to stand by the agreement. I am a little surprised that the minister put in the word "shall". I should think that it ought to read spokesmen of opposition parties "may" respond if they wish to. However, I suppose it does not make any difference; they all will.