

Privilege—Mr. Stevens

was a full hearing in that committee, and a complete withdrawal from the editor of the newspaper involved was secured. The editor said in writing:

I wish to express my unqualified regret that the newspaper of which I am editor should have offended in this way, and to offer my unreserved apologies. Steps will be taken to avoid any repetition of such an offence.

That was signed by the editor. There is also the famous 1965 case involving the present Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, who accused Conservative MPs of being spokesmen for large corporations and trusts. A *prima facie* case of privilege was found and Mr. Callaghan appeared in committee to explain his words. May I again put on the record those words, Mr. Speaker, as they appear in the third report of the privileges committee in England. Mr. Callaghan's words were:

I have almost forgotten their constituencies—

He was referring to the opposition.

—but I shall never forget their interests. I wonder sometimes whom they represent? The constituents or their own or friends' particular interests?

Again Your Honour will note that the words were in the form of a question, and the British House found that they were words which required a reference to their committee on privileges. Again there was a full hearing in that committee and the then chancellor of the exchequer was invited to explain the words he had used. In view of the chancellor's explanation that—

—I did not have it in mind in my speech at Swansea either to state or imply that hon. members who possess interests are acting or were acting improperly in taking part in discussions on the finance bill—

—and his assurance that—

—nothing in my speech was intended to be derogatory in any way to parliament—

—the committee recommended that no further action be taken. Each of these instances, and in fact several other precedents that I could cite to Your Honour, support my contention that the words used by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources are similar to words which have always been of great concern to members of the House. In all instances the words have either been altered or an assurance has been offered that they were not intended to be taken in the way that the person concerned had taken them. Almost invariably, if there was no withdrawal there was a reference to the appropriate privileges committee.

I appreciate that Your Honour has preferred in the past to deal with this sort of derogatory and insulting language as disorderly, but that you feel that withdrawal should first be requested. I so request such withdrawal from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. However, if that does not occur, based on the precedents that I have cited and many others that I would be pleased to cite to Your Honour, I submit that a question of privilege exists, and if so found I would move:

That the imputations by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that the questions directed to him by the hon. member for York-Simcoe have been put because the member is an agent for foreign corporations and promoting their interests be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am concerned that we may be getting a little tender about statements made by one member

[Mr. Stevens.]

to another, and that we may have one of these questions of privilege every day. I hope that is not the result of my decision recently with respect to the Prime Minister. I did not hear the hon. member for York-Simcoe quote his comment which I have taken from *Hansard* as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who seems to be stoutly defending Gulf U.S. for reasons I am not sure of.

If I am to find that the minister has said something derogatory about the hon. member for York-Simcoe, can the hon. member tell me whether I should find that he has said something equally derogatory about the minister?

Mr. Stevens: If you so find, Mr. Speaker, then I would be more than willing to withdraw that comment concerning the minister which I made yesterday. The point, Mr. Speaker, is that I feel I have made great efforts to try to bring to this House and the Canadian public information on exactly what transpired during this uranium cartel's existence, and I resent greatly any suggestion by the minister or anybody else on that side that I have been doing that for false motives or as an agent for anybody, let alone a foreign corporation.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I can take the hon. member's remarks under review, those he made yesterday and the arguments that he made today, to see whether or not they do, in fact, come within the terms of my previous ruling, which is as follows as reported at page 818 of *Hansard* for November 14:

The arguments which were made in defence at this time were similar to the ones made in defence on this particular occasion; that is, members are entitled to have certain opinions and to express them, whether or not evidence exists in support of them. In effect, that is exactly the privilege which members enjoy—

However, the fact is that when that opinion expressed turns into a direct statement—as it did in the circumstances of the hon. member for York-Simcoe—that an illegality has occurred, it is on that precedent clear to me that it goes beyond the bounds of what is acceptable in a parliamentary sense—

In examining the argument put forward by the hon. member for York-Simcoe today, and in examining the language which was used yesterday, I find that the question of privilege fails on two grounds. In the first place, it is not a statement, it is a question. In the second place, it is not an illegality. Therefore, the requirement I have set out on previous occasions of a statement of an illegality by one member against another fails because it is not a statement and it is not an illegality. What the minister did yesterday was to put this matter into question, and here is the language that was used:

● (1522)

Mr. Speaker, the real question in my mind is whether the hon. member is serving Canadian interests or whether he is acting as an agent of a foreign corporation that is contending with Canadian regulations. We are all aware that the issues which he has been promoting are the issues which Westinghouse of the United States have been promoting because they are looking for a defence for their own mistakes.

It seems to me that the minister put that into question, and it is, in any case, put into question and is not a statement. In the second place, even if it is put as a statement, which it is not, it is not an illegality to my knowledge.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!