

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 11, 1974

The House met at 11 a.m.

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. WAGNER—OBJECTION TO CERTAIN REMARKS BY
POSTMASTER GENERAL

Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning certain comments of a discriminatory and defamatory nature made in this House Friday afternoon by the Postmaster General and repeated by him outside this House during the entire weekend. These comments appear on pages 332 and 333 of *Hansard* for March 8, 1974, in particular.

Because an hon. member on this side of the House dared to ask for explanations, for his own information, on certain dealings presumably to the advantage of the Quebec provincial Liberals, the minister took this to be an insult to French Canadians in Quebec.

Like has often been the case in the past, the minister did not hesitate, by referring to matters of racial prejudice, to generalize his statements in order to sully all the members of the official opposition, including the hon. members for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Grafftey), Joliette (Mr. La Salle), and Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner).

The minister conveniently forgot to mention the ardent campaign which the Liberal member for Matane fought in order to denigrate the Drapeau administration, to undermine the work of COJO authorities and to prevent the holding of the Olympic Games, and in the case of which no one, either on this side of the House or on the other side, had the slightest wish to pretend that the Liberals are against the French Canadians and always have the odd greenhorn to sully people, to parody the words used by the minister and reported on page 333 of *Hansard*.

Mr. Speaker, racism of whatever type has no place in this House or in this country and the comments of the Postmaster General are saturated with it.

In rising on a question of privilege as a member of the official opposition, I demand to the Postmaster General to have enough principles and courage to react as a gentleman and state that his comments were exaggerated. Otherwise, I will have no other choice than to believe, as millions of other Canadians, that elections will soon be called and that the narrow-mindedness so often shown by the minister will become for the Liberals a way to save their skin, as they think.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister—

Mr. Speaker: As the House knows, when a member is involved in a question of privilege, he has the opportunity, if he wishes so, to answer briefly, to enable the Chair to determine whether there is a *prima facie* case of privilege.

I doubt whether the right to answer can be assumed by another member on behalf of the one now involved. Moreover, I think that the Postmaster General is in the House.

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I understand that my remarks may have caused a certain anxiety to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Wagner). If he has personal recriminations against Mr. Desrochers or if he has some evidence against that man to support the charges of the member for High Park-Humber Valley (Mr. Jelinek) which I believe to be baseless, he should state them and they would be considered.

However, I think I know why he may have grievances against that man and I think that the hon. member's feelings ought not to prevail in a matter as important as the Olympic Games. I hope the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) will consider my recommendation and appoint someone to talk on behalf of his party concerning the Olympics, someone who has more common sense than—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Presenting reports from standing and special committees. Motions. Introduction of bills.

Mr. Haliburton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Chair, but when you called motions you proceeded so rapidly that I missed the opportunity to propose a motion I had prepared. I would hope we might revert to motions so I could do so.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member's motion is a little late. However, if hon. members agree, certainly there will be no difficulty about reverting to motions to allow the hon. member to put his motion. Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Haliburton: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and hon. members.