

Gives answers in a breeze.
Provides the need for tranquil thought
For skim milk, take one udder,
It's 2 for cheese and 3 for cream,
Grab 4 if you want budder.

An hon. Member: Table it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. member for Oxford have a question?

Mr. Halliday: Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the provision of milk and cheese and the other two events which came to my attention last week. I ask the minister if he can confirm that last week at a banquet in the Chateau Laurier, a CN hotel, given by the National Capital Commission in honour of over 250 students from across Canada, no milk was available for those students.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Halliday: Could he confirm that CEMA, the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, has negotiated a deal with companies such that they now provide this kind of coupon worth 15 cents in a box of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I gave the hon. member more than sufficient leniency and I think he has overextended it.

An hon. Member: Come on, Gene.

An hon. Member: He wants an answer.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. BASFORD—FINANCE—ALLEGATIONS MADE BY HON. MEMBER FOR YORK-SIMCOE REGARDING SPECULATION ON DOLLAR BY MPs

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege relating to the matter raised during the question period by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) involving statements made on Friday evening, in a Canadian Press story, by the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens). I regret that having occupied the headlines of the news media for the week end the hon. member is not in his seat today—

Some hon. Members: Shame!

● (1502)

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 19, 1978, a Canadian Press story was transmitted and subsequently broadcast on a number of radio and television stations, as well as published in a number of newspapers, quoting the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens). The story in part reads as follows, and I am quoting from the Canadian Press story as published in the Ottawa *Citizen* of May 20, 1978:

Privilege—Mr. Basford

Conservative finance critic Sinclair Stevens says he has been told by bank sources that nine Liberal MP's, including two or three cabinet ministers, have been involved in speculation against the dollar . . .

In the interview, Stevens said: We've learned through the banks that nine Liberal MP's played the Canadian market as it was going down . . .

Stevens said in the interview that about two or three cabinet ministers were supposed to have been involved. "Presumably they've broken their oath for secrecy" Stevens said.

The seriousness of this story and these statements was underlined by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who, in his question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), pointed out the serious nature of these statements.

For our part, we on this side find that they have no validity. This interview and the unsubstantiated and grave allegations, in my opinion, constitute a question of privilege, and adversely reflect upon members in our capacity as members or as ministers.

There can be no doubt that such untruths are intended to cast doubt on the honesty and integrity of members on this side of the House. In so doing, the hon. member for York-Simcoe has gravely reflected upon all of us on this side. As the Prime Minister in his answer a moment ago pointed out, he has in fact by these unsubstantiated and, if I may say so, reckless statements, reflected upon all in public life.

Since making them, he has done nothing to substantiate them, withdraw them, or correct them, except, I understand, to explain that he was fairly "relaxed". I would not think that loose lips would be a desirable characteristic of an official financial critic of the official opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: He has done nothing to alert the Prime Minister as to the persons involved or the seriousness, or any facts that he may be in possession of. In my view these statements clearly constitute an abuse of privileges of members of the House. If Your Honour so finds, I am prepared to move a motion.

Having had occasion recently to reflect on a number of cases, I think Your Honour will be familiar with the authorities. May I simply quote Erskine May on Parliamentary Practice, nineteenth edition, page 152:

"Written imputations, as affecting a member of parliament, may amount to breach of privilege, without, perhaps, being libels at common law", but to constitute a breach of privilege a libel upon a member must concern the character or conduct of the member in that capacity.

Your Honour recently had occasion to refer to Beauchesne's citation No. 140, and I quote:

The ruling relating to personal reflections occurring in debate may be stated thus, namely: that it is doubly disorderly for any member, in speaking, to digress from the question before the House and to attack any other member by means of opprobrious language, applied to his person and character, or to his conduct, either in general, or on some particular occasion, and tending to bring into ridicule, contempt, or hatred with his fellow-members, or to create ill blood in the House.

Your Honour's citation at page 11999 of *Hansard* for March 22, 1976, continues: