

Hansard—Altering of Report

to be in the way of a binding decision, you permit hon. members to make comments in regard to the situation?

Mr. Speaker: Would the Leader of the Opposition proceed now?

Hon. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Yes. The reason I suggested that this matter be discussed before anything in the nature of a ruling be made is that, if a ruling were made, then there would be no further debate, and one of the most important subjects to come before the house would therefore be ruled out of debate.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this subject has not in any way been changed by what has been said. I am, in fact, rising on a point of privilege and I will proceed, if Your Honour believes that it is appropriate that I should proceed, on that basis. But I had hoped I might be permitted to do so before any ruling would be made which purported to dispose of the question of privilege raised by the Minister of Agriculture, and then not dealt with. All he did was to indicate what he thought he should have said on Friday. He neither apologized for the course he has followed, nor did he seek to have redress made for the very improper procedure that was adopted.

Now, Your Honour has mentioned two deletions and suggested that these are minor essential alterations. I submit that they go a great deal further than that. The first of these deletions appeared in the second last paragraph of the second column of page 1056, following the figure "155,000". Your Honour has already read them, but so that they may be in context I would repeat the words. "They used only 6,000 pounds of margarine. Then they had other fats, neither margarine nor butter, amounting to 53,000 pounds". The second deletion appeared in the fifth last line of the last paragraph in column two at page 1056, following the word, "butter". In that case, after the word "butter" and a comma, this appears, "13,591 pounds of margarine and 103,146 pounds of other fats."

And now, Mr. Speaker, this was part of a statement dealing with the broad question of the impact of the use of margarine on the use of butter under certain circumstances. If one reads the pages that follow, one will find that this fits into the context of general remarks, and one also finds what the result would be of a procedure of this kind because the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Philpott) is left up in the air so far as *Hansard* is concerned. He is left in the position of having asked a question at page 1064, which does not relate to anything that was said. Nothing could better illustrate that this is not a question of minor alterations. It changes the whole

context of the debate. If this can happen, then *Hansard* for practical purposes becomes a very ineffective record of the debates in this house.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I submit there are well-established rules in regard to the printing, in regard to the amendments, in regard to the nature of corrections which go much farther than those that have been suggested. There are long-established rules governing how corrections are to be made. Certain changes can be made by the member speaking. On the back page of each daily edition of what we describe as *Hansard* appear the words:

Official report of debates.

No refinement of argument changes the fact that this is regarded as the official report of debates; whether sitting with the Speaker in the chair or in committee, these are the reports and the only reports of the debates that take place in the House of Commons. There need be no precedents read to establish what is permitted, because on the back page of *Hansard* there is printed each day, and it has been printed there for a long time, the following:

Following publication of the daily edition, proofs of their speeches or remarks are sent to members. These must be returned to the debates office within eight calendar days of the date on which the speech was made. Suggested changes must be confined to correction of errors and essential minor alterations.

The errors are not errors of the speaker, Mr. Speaker. The errors referred to there are the errors in *Hansard*. There is a procedure by which errors on the part of the speaker can be corrected, and that is adopted day after day here. Hon. members rise and say: "I seek leave to have *Hansard* corrected by inserting the following, or substituting certain words in place of words already appearing." There is no doubt about what that means. The correction of errors is the correction of errors made by *Hansard* in the reporting.

Fortunately, and as a great tribute to *Hansard*, those are very few indeed. Essential minor alterations mean something that does not affect the context. As a matter of fact it does not in any way change the meaning of what was said. It simply clarifies in some way the statement that was made, and that of course applies to the corrections that are to be made within eight days.

I want to submit, Mr. Speaker—and this is particularly the reason for the suggestion that no ruling be made before hon. members had an opportunity to make certain observations in regard to this subject—when it comes to making changes in the official report there is a clearly defined way of doing it.