

tion of the Postmaster General on the subject before deciding. As we usually do, I think it would be appropriate to wait for that.

MR. ANDRE—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT—MINISTER'S STATEMENT

**Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I will not take too much of the time of the House. My question of privilege arises out of a statement made by the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Buchanan) on June 1. The reason for the delay is that I was not aware of the difficulty until Monday of this week. It took until this morning to find the date necessary to be sure of the position. Basically it relates to the provision of misleading information to the House.

The statement by the Minister of State for Science and Technology was the presentation of a new science initiatives policy by the government, with appropriate fancy coloured brochures, background documentation, speech, press releases and so on. The minister made a statement in the House and tabled two supporting documents. One was entitled "Research and Development in Canada—Discussion Paper", and the other was entitled "Measures to Strengthen and Encourage Research and Development in Canada".

The first and the main point of the minister's statement was a declaration that the Canadian government was establishing a target of 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product for research and development expenditures by 1983. That is an important distinction. The figure 1.5 per cent does not have meaning in itself. It must be compared with other figures, or the historical performance of other countries, and so on. To give that target meaning the minister included in the document he tabled, a table indicating the historical performance in Canada in respect of research and development expenditures as a percentage of gross national product, from 1963 to 1977.

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To give meaning to this target the table is presented as a percentage of gross national product, yet the target itself is a percentage of gross domestic product. The figure in relation to domestic product is a figure historically smaller than in respect of gross national product. Therefore the minister has somehow engaged in flim-flam by saying this is our target, measured in so many oranges, and in comparison we produced so many apples in the past.

That is not my main point, Mr. Speaker. The sources of these data are referenced as the Bank of Canada *Review* and Statistics Canada Catalogue 13-003. It took me some time to find Statistics Canada catalogue 13-003. I finally traced it down and looked up the data, only to find that it is quite different from the data in this table. The effect of this difference is to make this target, about which the minister talked—the prime new initiative—look like a much greater change than in fact is the reality. If you use the data referenced by the minister, you will see it is gross domestic product, from the Bank of Canada. We are talking about data from the Bank of

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Canada and Statistics Canada, and I think that is beyond question in terms of its validity. In any event, you find that in effect this new target, instead of representing an increase from .9 per cent to 1.5 per cent, in the form of new ventures, is in fact a return to the 1971 levels of effort. That is a significant year in that it was the year the Ministry of Science and Technology was established, mainly because Canada's efforts were so puny in this field. It would appear to be, *prima facie*, that this was a deliberate attempt to make this policy initiative appear much greater and much more grand, if you like, than in fact is the reality.

It has been a long established practice in this House that the words of a minister are to be taken as fact. I think there is no difference whether the words of the minister are oral or in the written form; we accept them as factual. It is demonstrable that the data presented by the minister are not fact and are not accurate. Using his own references it can be shown that the information is wrong and creates quite a different impression, and distorts the information before the House.

If we are in a position as members of having to permit or allow ministers to present misleading and inaccurate data, then I think our opportunities to participate and contribute in a meaningful way are infringed upon. I would maintain that this represents a question of privilege, and that—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have tried to allow the hon. member as much latitude as I thought he would need to develop his argument fully, and to make sure that I understood it completely.

I will examine the hon. member's representations. I will reserve judgment at the present time, but my very clear impression is that he has a disagreement in respect of the interpretation of statistics presented by the Minister. Presumably the minister will argue that he puts an entirely different interpretation on the figures. I am sure there have been many occasions, and the hon. member will recognize this, when there have been accusations of total disagreement in respect of the accuracy of figures and statistics. If every time that argument were made, by an hon. member on one or the other side of the House, it resolved itself into a question of privilege, the extension of privilege would be far greater than most of us believe it to be in terms of the classic definition. However, I will examine the hon. member's argument to see whether there is the appearance of a question of privilege and, if so, I will rule on it as soon as I possibly can.

**Mr. Andre:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong the argument, but your reaction to my remarks causes me to consider that possibly I did not express my concerns accurately.

This does not involve a matter of disagreement over numbers. We agree that Statistics Canada and the Bank of Canada are the authoritative sources of this data. The minister claimed that this was what he was presenting but, in fact, did not do so. If that is not a misleading of the House then, my goodness, I cannot think of anything that could possibly be misleading. He has claimed those two statistics as the authority for his sugges-