

Point of Order—Mr. Epp

Canada, sought relief for "senior personnel" whose retirement allowances were affected by provisions contained within the November 1981 Budget.

Taken in isolation, "senior personnel" can be interpreted to mean persons highly placed in the executive structure of the company on the one hand or, alternatively, it could be interpreted to mean those employees who have long-time seniority with the company. In this particular case it is clear it was the latter interpretation that should have been placed upon the words.

The memorandum attached to the letter notes:

—the Iron Ore Company questioned the advisability of proceeding with a policy change which will impact negatively on the ability of private sector employers to prove a minimum level of economic security to long time employees coming to the age of retirement—

Therefore there was no doubt in the mind of the author of the memorandum that senior personnel were those with long-term seniority, not those in the high echelons of the company.

This, however, is not the impression left by the French translation of the letter as provided to the House by the Minister of Finance. The English word "senior" is translated into the French word "supérieur". Thus, rather than referring to employees of long service, the French translation takes the English word "senior" to mean upper level or senior officers of the company.

However, the translation of the letter is clearly out of context with the attached memorandum which was translated to read in part as follows:

[Text]

«La compagnie se demandait s'il était souhaitable de procéder à un changement de politique, qui aurait des effets négatifs sur la capacité des employeurs du secteur privé d'assurer un minimum de sécurité économique à des employés qui avaient travaillé durant de longues années et arrivant à l'âge de la retraite...»

[English]

I will leave to others the determination of how this rather unusual mistake could have been made in the translation of the letter. What is at issue today is whether or not a document, which purports to be an accurate translation of a letter tabled in the House by a Minister and which was written by another Member of the House, can be allowed to remain on record as a sessional paper when it contains such an obvious error.

Although it is clearly beyond the reach of Members to question the truthfulness of documents tabled by the Minister of Finance or by any other Member of the House, it seems to me that we are confronted with a peculiar problem in this instance because the documents tabled by the Minister originated with the Leader of the Opposition. Which Member, within the confines of the rules of the House, should determine the meaning of the sentiments expressed in writing by the Leader of the Opposition to an individual who is not a Member of the House?

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the House is faced with a clear and unambiguous example of why it is against the rules of the House to allude to correspondence between Members and Ministers. Again, the difficulty inherent in the

tabling of private documents by Ministers is underlined for all Members to see, and unfortunately for you, Mr. Speaker, it is up to you to determine how the House should proceed to extricate itself from this dilemma.

Had this been an error in the Votes and Proceedings or in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, it could have been easily remedied by a motion under Standing Order 36(1)(p). However, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if a sessional paper can be accurately described as a record of the House. It may be that the Minister will be required to table a corrected version of the translation of the April 30, 1982 letter. On the other hand, if you were to rule that a motion under S.O. 36(1)(p) would be appropriate, I would be prepared to move such a motion.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I ask that you take the matter under consideration in the larger content of the point of order and provide some direction to the House as to the proper solution to this problem.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I too rise on a point of order relating to last Tuesday's exchange between the Minister of Finance and the Leader of the Opposition. I have had the opportunity to note that there are certain discrepancies between the electronic record of the debates and the printed record as it appears in *Hansard*. In one instance the reference made by the Minister of Finance to "the only representation" received from the Leader of the Opposition, which is audible on the video tape of the proceedings, does not appear at all in *Hansard*.

In another instance, a remark made by the Minister to the effect that the Leader of the Opposition went behind the Minister's back in communicating with officials of the Department, which is audible on the video tape of the proceedings, does not appear in *Hansard*. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, there does appear to be a substantial number of changes made by someone between the time the remarks were uttered by the Minister and the time the account provided in *Hansard* was printed.

Mr. Domm: Cover-up!

Miss MacDonald: Editorial decisions, as you know, Sir, made by *Hansard* are one thing but if on the other hand these changes were made by the Minister or by someone working in his office, I would have concerns as to the extent to which the transcripts were altered in light of the tabling in the House of not one, but several letters from the Leader of the Opposition to the Minister, to his predecessor and to departmental officials.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, if the changes were made by the Minister or his office, I think they should be examined in the light of Citations 155(1) and 155(2) of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition. I will not recite them at the present time, but I know you will read them for yourself, Sir.

I would be most appreciative, Mr. Speaker, if you would look into this rather serious matter to determine the full extent of the alterations and, indeed, the person, persons or agency responsible for making these changes. I have a video tape that was provided to me by the broadcasting branch of the House