

Question of Privilege

The writer suggested that when challenged to risk my seat by making a definite accusation of misconduct I did not take up that challenge. I think this error can be explained by reference to *Hansard* of October 12 at page 8577 where the minister is reported as having said:

Under the law of this country my officials report to me and I report to parliament. I want a specific charge made.

That is to be found in the right hand column. In the other column there is a suggestion by the minister that the charge is "a trifle evasive". It is only fair to the press gallery reporter to point out that the minister himself may be responsible in a way for this particular misstatement of fact by the reporter. I would say, therefore, that with regard to this particular misstatement of fact I am not imputing any improper motive to the reporter or anything other than carelessness. He has listened to the Minister of National Defence and has been misled by the statements made by that minister, who said he wanted a specific charge made when a specific charge had already been made. And the minister is sitting in the house under that charge.

The impression the minister gave by the statement he made, as reported on page 8576—

If members of the opposition would be willing to formulate a charge that I have tampered with the evidence of a committee—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to interrupt the hon. member again and ask for his co-operation. Certainly he is not abiding by the spirit of the rules of the house when he seeks to go behind the motion as moved in order to discuss a matter which is not before the house at all. Once again I ask for his co-operation. Let us try to have a logical and legitimate debate at this time.

Mr. Nugent: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will summarize my argument this way. First, the article complained of should be investigated because it is wrong in fact. It suggests that I failed to make a definite accusation of misconduct, when the essence of the situation is that a definite charge had been made.

The article is wrong when it suggests there is some sort of collusive agreement with certain admirals. I only know two admirals, or have met only two. I have met Admiral Landymore once. There is a suggestion that he was about this house, pounding the corridors. I have no reason to believe he was in Ottawa. I met him once when I sought to

assure myself that the evidence on which I intended to base my charge was available.

The charge that anybody directed me from the gallery in the manner suggested is incorrect. I think an attempt should be made to determine whether there was any justification for this suggestion, other than the presence of this mysterious informant, which prompted the writer to bring into this affair the question of religion and race. I must ask the house to look very carefully at this question of privilege as it was raised by me on Wednesday, October 12. Nothing was said by me which might have been interpreted in any way as having to do with race or religion. At no time did I accuse the minister of allowing religious questions to be brought into this matter or of permitting prejudice against anyone on grounds of race.

• (3:30 p.m.)

I think that there is a question of how this member of the press gallery was induced to make such a charge, since he says his informant is "an English speaking military man." Certainly the committee should be interested in finding out who this English speaking military man is who would do such a disservice to this house and to the country by attempting to drag a red herring of this kind across the very simple question of whether or not the Minister of National Defence is guilty, as charged, of tempering with evidence, and I suggest it does this house and country a great disservice to try to muddy the waters with questions that no one would want to bring in on this matter.

The article went on to state:

The appointment of General Allard and the replacement of Rear Admiral Landymore by Rear Admiral O'Brien, an Irish Catholic, has angered the defenders of the bastion.

I wish to inform the house, sir, that I have never to my knowledge met General Allard. I suppose it is possible that at one of those receptions that members of parliament attend I might have met him and forgotten about it, but certainly such a meeting, if there was one, did not impress me. The same applies to Rear Admiral O'Brien.

I have nothing against either of these gentlemen. So far as I know I have never met them. I have never heard anything derogatory said about them by anyone which would indicate that they are not fit and proper gentlemen for the positions they occupy, and I have never said or done anything to derogate from their reputations.

Mr. Pickersgill: Is this not over yet?