

Administration of Justice

question of privilege which can only be dealt with by the minister getting on his feet.

I ask the minister, I ask him now, did he make the statements which appeared in the press? I ask him did he say that two or more former Conservative ministers were involved with a former East German spy? I ask him did he say—

Miss LaMarsh: Are you reading from a newspaper?

Mr. Nielsen: I am taking responsibility for the remarks I am making, which I always do in this house.

Did the minister say that he would ask the cabinet to reopen the case? Did he say there was an R.C.M.P. file? Did he say he had not seen it? Did he say he was briefed on it? Did he say that the opposition leader did not handle the case properly, and should explain? Did he say that the Opposition Leader never referred the matter to the law officers of the crown? Did he say that he learned about the case in another department?

These are the questions, the answers to which we must have before we can set up any kind of inquiry. Did he say that it was worse than the Profumo case?

I ask him now to rise in his place and answer. If he had done so at the outset, perhaps we could have come to grips and set up terms of reference, or enlarged the terms of reference of the second inquiry which the Prime Minister announced last Monday. But the minister has remained silent throughout and ignored the obligation which he has to substantiate the charges he made, the key to the whole issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Can the hon. member for Yukon tell us whether the questions he is now asking the Minister of Justice are based on newspaper articles? Furthermore, does he take full responsibility for the questions which he is asking at this time?

A while ago, you told me that I should assume responsibility for my questions. Does the member for Yukon assume the same responsibility? Are the questions he is asking now derived from newspaper articles?

Should the member for Yukon be treated differently from another member?

Let the member for Yukon begin by practicing what he so vehemently preaches.

[Mr. Nielsen.]

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Well, the hon. member obviously was not listening, because I said I was taking full responsibility for what I was saying, as I always do in the house. Did the Minister of Justice say that the Liberals were tired of hearing of—to use the phrase I saw in the press—

Mr. Caouette: Which press?

Mr. Nielsen: —of “Diefenbaker’s” insinuating that the government was plunged in scandals? Did he say that the Liberals were going to fight back hard, using the same tactics? Did he say “We know she had been engaged in espionage prior to coming to Canada”? Did he say two or more ministers were involved? Did he say government action at the time was justified but it was too late now? Did he say that the girl was dead? Did he say he was not in a position to comment whether there was a security leak? That is an extremely important question, which he should answer in the house.

Did he say that his objective was to press the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) to explain his conduct in not turning the case over to the law officers of the Crown? Did he say these things?

He can cut all of this debate short by rising in his place and making the accusations here and now. It is for this reason, sir, that the proposal of the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) does not and cannot meet the breach of privilege which has been established here.

The Prime Minister can set up an inquiry. He can set up as many inquiries as he pleases but this, sir, cannot remove from parliament’s right to deal with its own privileges and the breach of those privileges which has taken place. There is only one way in which this matter can be resolved. It must be resolved by the acceptance, by the Minister of Justice and by the government, of the time honoured, of the traditional, of the mandatory obligation upon any member of the house to back up in the house the charges which he makes. That is what the minister must do now. He has no option, sir.

He must rise in his place and make his charges, or withdraw them. If he does not do this, sir, he must resign. There is no other way in which parliament can be satisfied. To continue on the course adopted by the Minister of Justice and by the Prime Minister, is simply to set the Minister of Justice against parliament. It is to set this government