

Mr. Trudeau: I will not go back to accusations of last week that this government interfered with the administration of justice, that we covered up, and so forth. These seem to me to be general accusations of illegality. But I want to raise a question of privilege with regard to something which was stated today by the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We had better take one at a time. The Prime Minister, it seems to me—as has been done on previous occasions—has indicated that that portion of his remarks which were made before and which I indicated were within parliamentary bounds, that is to say, the expression of any suspicions of a general nature, remains. That aspect of his remarks which contain an offensive or opprobrious quality, that is to say, a direct accusation against members of a particular party in this House, has now been withdrawn. That seems to me to close that matter. If there are other matters of privilege arising out of today's question period, I can hear them at this time.

MR. TRUDEAU—WORDS USED BY MR. DIEFENBAKER IN S.O. 43 MOTION

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I rise on question of privilege affecting all members of this House, and particularly the government, arising from words contained in a Standing Order 43 motion moved by the right hon. member for Prince Albert. I regret that he is not in the House—

An hon. Member: He is here.

An hon. Member: Put your glasses on.

Mr. Hees: You are older than you think.

Mr. Trudeau: I was looking at the previous seating arrangement and I forgot that the right hon. gentleman has been promoted toward the leadership. However, the words Your Honour used in your ruling were that one could not accuse another party, another group, or the government of having committed an illegality. I believe the words "illegality" and "wrongdoing" were the words Your Honour used. They were the very words used by the right hon. gentleman in moving his motion today. He used the words "unlawful action and wrongdoing" with reference to the government.

I submit that this affects the privileges of this House, because no illegality or wrongdoing has been proved. There have been some alleged. There are suspicions. Hon. members opposite are trying to find out. But there has been no proof of wrongdoing or illegality in this matter. Therefore, the right hon. gentleman is doing something which is clearly contrary to Your Honour's ruling when he says that this government is guilty of unlawful action and wrongdoing. Therefore, if Your Honour finds a prima facie case of privilege, I will be prepared to move a substantive motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Privilege—Mr. Broadbent

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am not unaware that the precedent to which I have referred and drawn upon so heavily in coming to the conclusion I came to earlier this day is one which may, in fact, give rise to a number of arguments about statements made by members of this House, and in fact hon. members are going to have to guard themselves carefully. In fact, what has taken place today—or, in fact, at any time with an application pursuant to Standing Order 43—is that a member asked the House for its unanimous consent to debate a particular motion, and that is quite different from an allegation or a statement.

Mr. Trudeau: If you move it, you believe it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members will have to realize that a member seeks permission within the Standing Orders to put forward a motion for debate and discussion. It is not, in its basic nature, a statement but is in fact a motion which is proposed for debate. I express some concern about the contents of that and other motions, but the basic recognition that the Chair has to make in most cases pursuant to Standing Order 43 is that even if they do contain phrases which, if used as a statement, might be offensive to parliament, they are not in fact statements but are motions which are being put forward for debate.

In those circumstances the Chair is in a very difficult position to exercise any scrutiny in a parliamentary sense unless the motion itself seems to me to offend the provisions of the Standing Order or to go beyond the administrative jurisdiction or the responsibility of the House. I do not say that I fail to apply or recognize that there will be occasions upon which members will make accusations of dereliction of duty which may be entirely parliamentary. If they go beyond allegations of dereliction of duty and extend it to allegations of illegality, I will enforce the same precedent as I have today, whether it occurs on the left or on the right side of the House.

● (1522)

MR. BROADBENT—ALLEGED ILLEGAL ACTS OF RCMP—MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, before I get on my question of privilege of which I gave Your Honour notice, I was glad to see that in accepting your ruling the Prime Minister lived up to his reputation of being a complete gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege pertains to certain statements made by ministers, including the Prime Minister, regarding the lack of a certain kind of required action by ministers which seriously impedes our ability, as members of this House of Commons, to do our job. Each of these arises from the ongoing issue of criminal wrongdoing and allegations of criminal wrongdoing involving the RCMP. The first pertains to the very important notion of ministerial responsibility, a notion as old as parliamentary democracy itself. In this instance I shall refer specifically to the Solicitor General.

The second aspect of my question of privilege—and fundamentally more serious, in my view—concerns the principle of