

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 22, 1968

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. FULTON—REPORTED STATEMENT BY
PRIME MINISTER IN TELEVISION
INTERVIEW

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege which involves the privileges and rights of members of this house and of this house itself. This question of privilege arises out of words used by the Prime Minister in the course of a C.B.C. national television interview which was broadcast last night. The words to which I refer, among others which are a reflection upon this house, upon the members of this house and the proceedings of this house, are the following:

That's the way elections should be brought about. Not by this kind of trickery—

Hon. members will find these words recorded at page 22 of the official transcript of the broadcast interview. Then there is the following phrase:

Are you going to let these people manoeuvre you by this kind of trickery into a general election at this particular time?

Those words are to be found at page 14 of the same transcript. There are other related phrases to which I will refer during the course of my remarks. My point of privilege is that these words have reference to the proceedings in this house on Monday night and to the participation of members in those proceedings as well as the conduct of members therein. Second, they constitute a slander on the members of the house and the Deputy Speaker with regard to his conduct of those proceedings. Third, they are contrary to the truth. Fourth they are therefore a reflection on our proceedings and as such are a breach of privilege.

I should like briefly to develop and establish these points. First, with regard to the word "trickery", I do not intend to detain the house at any great length by a reference to long definitions. I should like to refer hon.

members to the Shorter Oxford English dictionary where they will find the word "trickery" defined as:

The practice of tricks; deceitful conduct or practice; deception, artifice; imposture.

These, Mr. Speaker, are the terms the Prime Minister applied to the conduct of members of this house, including especially all members present on that occasion in all the opposition parties in this house. The implication also embodies, of course, all members of the government and the Deputy Speaker. I do not think there is any question that these terms, in any proper understanding of them, are a slanderous reflection upon what took place here.

● (2:40 p.m.)

In the second place, there is no doubt that the reference is to the proceedings of last Monday night. The words by their very nature refer to those proceedings, as does the broadcast itself. If there were any doubt I would refer to the words used by the Prime Minister in this broadcast as they are to be found at page 3 of the transcript:

There is a crisis being manufactured because we lost a vote in third reading by 84 to 82 on a measure last Monday night.

So it is clear that the whole reference is to the proceedings in this house on that occasion. As such the reference constitutes a slanderous attack on every member who voted and, as I say, on the Deputy Speaker; because we are accused of the practice of tricks, deceitful conduct, deception, artifice, imposture. The Deputy Speaker is therefore, by inference, necessarily either a dupe of such a trick or else an accomplice. This is the necessary inference from what the Prime Minister has said with respect to an officer of this house.

I have described the words and the conduct of the Prime Minister as amounting to a slander directed against our proceedings and against all hon. members, a slander not only because of the meaning of the word itself, as established by its definition, but also because it is contrary to the truth as well as because everything the Prime Minister said in this broadcast as to what took place and as to the background of what took place, is contrary to