

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 26, 1971

The House met at 11 a.m.

## PRIVILEGE

MR. BALDWIN—ALLEGED REFLECTION BY PRIME MINISTER ON MANNER IN WHICH OPPOSITION DEALS WITH HOUSE BUSINESS

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** I rise on a question of privilege in respect of which I have given notice to Your Honour. It deals with the immoderate and intemperate charges levied by the Prime Minister against the opposition parties yesterday, charges which were quite improper and untrue. Your Honour will have noted that there has been filed with you under the pertinent rule a notice from each of the House Leaders of the opposition parties. When necessary we can disagree with each other, but when this institution is threatened by the kind of statements which were made yesterday our approach is that of people who are concerned about what happens to Parliament.

My question of privilege deals with statements made by the Prime Minister in French to French students. I have only a rough translation of a rough statement. I propose to read some of them to Your Honour and then, before I conclude, to cite authorities which indicate that these are in fact infringements upon this House. These are some of the statements he made:

They—

Referring to the opposition.

—try to stop the government programs by following the clock. They say—

I do not know whether or not the Prime Minister adopts this statement.

—parliament is rotten because they sit for weeks and don't pass any bills, preventing the government from passing all the laws and measures that are important—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baldwin:**

—gabbing for two weeks on government reorganization. They are blocking other things. The tactic of the opposition is to stop the government from doing anything.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baldwin:** These statements are slanderous per se.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**An hon. Member:** No, they are truthful.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Certainly they contain a strong innuendo, which no one can mistake, that the opposition parties and their members are guilty of abusing their parliamentary functions and acting with impropriety in the discharge of their duties.

● (11:10 a.m.)

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Speaker, no member of this House, not even a Prime Minister who is suffering from unfounded delusions of grandeur, can make these charges and not expect to be called to account for them. I think the right hon. gentleman must school himself to accept the discipline of the rules of this House, as other hon. members do.

These statements are scurrilous and slanderous. In any event, they are riddled with distortions, half truths and perversions of the facts. Bills are passed and have been passed in this House, and any examination of the record will show that. Let us examine the record. Today's order paper contains only nine government measures; as a result of arrangements made, two of them will probably be passed today, leaving seven measures outstanding on the order paper. That is a fact which the Prime Minister ought to have known before he made these statements.

A statement was made yesterday about the Public Order (Temporary Measures) Act. Shortly before the final passage of that Act, some of us conducted an examination of the time spent on it. Examination of the record indicated that government members had taken more time on that bill than any other party.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baldwin:** The Prime Minister has seen fit to level his charges primarily in respect of the government organization bill. I will not go back into the history of that bill and Your Honour's decision with respect to its omnibus nature. But let it be known that less than four hours were taken on second reading. Approximately 20 hours, or four days, were spent on the environmental aspect of the bill, which could be brought to a conclusion at any minute, as the government knows, by a certain procedure. Less than six hours were spent in dealing with the question of ministers of state. One hour was spent in dealing with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, one hour was spent in dealing with the Department of the Postmaster General, and so on. When one examines clearly and honestly the time that has been spent on this bill which has been improperly brought before the House—when I say "improperly" I am not