

Conduct of Justice Minister

urgency is the fact that the commissioner gives evidence tomorrow. What will he say? [Translation]

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, if there has ever been in this house someone entitled to rise on a question of privilege and ask that his privilege be respected, I am undoubtedly that person, in the circumstances, especially after the odious charge made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Here is the answer to the first question.

Last Friday morning the deputy commissioner of the R.C.M.P. stated in good faith before the Dorion commission that he was under the impression that the Prime Minister had advised his parliamentary secretary of the fact that he would be questioned by the R.C.M.P., not long before the inquiry. As I had not informed the Prime Minister of that possible inquiry, he could not give that information to Mr. Rouleau; I merely wanted to set the records straight immediately.

My action was even more important because of the fact that the inquiry was being resumed four days later, that is tomorrow, Tuesday. Moreover, Chief Justice Dorion had found this part of the evidence illegal and had stated that it could not be taken into account, and this goes for newspapermen as well as for the Leader of the Opposition.

As newspapers, radio and television had broadcast information and comments based on evidence which did not exist legally, I thought, and I still believe—

[Text]

Mr. Nielsen: That is for the judge to say.

Mr. Favreau: He has said it, if you have read the transcript.

Mr. Nielsen: The veracity has yet to be shown.

An hon. Member: Your veracity.

Mr. Nielsen: That is not in question.

[Translation]

Mr. Favreau:—that it was my duty, both as a minister of the crown and as a private individual, to issue a statement so as to make the facts quite clear and to dispel any suspicions about the position of the Prime Minister in the circumstances.

I tried to get in touch with Judge Dorion in order to notify him before the deadline set for evening news, but he had already left for Quebec city.

[Text]

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry [Mr. Diefenbaker.]

to interrupt the Minister of Justice, but the minister—and I have no objection to it—is now presenting argument regarding this motion. Will Your Honour rule now that the motion is allowed and that we will be permitted to discuss and debate the matter, in the same manner that the Minister of Justice is being allowed to do at the present time?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McIlraith: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam missed the fact that the Minister of Justice rose to assert a question of privilege involving himself—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McIlraith:—and is not addressing himself to the question of urgency of debate, as was done by the Leader of the Opposition in the latter part of his remarks.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He issued another press release today.

[Translation]

Mr. Favreau: Mr. Speaker, I will take only a few minutes more to tell the truth, and that will certainly do no harm to the opposition.

Therefore, I immediately prepared and sent him a letter containing the statement and explaining the reasons of my intervention. I intend to table a copy of this letter in the house as soon as the hearings are resumed.

If there actually remained any doubt as to the procedure followed by me, the matter could only be raised before the Dorion commission and not in this house.

[Text]

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that both the mover of the motion and the Minister of Justice have put forward a good deal of argument rather than discussing the question of urgency of debate. I think it would be just as well to allow the motion now and permit the debate to continue, because it has already raised a great many questions to which some answers are required. However, I shall confine myself to the matter of urgency of debate until Your Honour has given a ruling. I submit that it is urgent that this matter be discussed here, now, this afternoon.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister of Justice said in the statement which he just read to the house that Deputy Commissioner Lemieux said he was under the impression that the Prime Minister had advised his former parliamentary secretary that he would be interrogated by the R.C.M.P.; but I understand from