

this comes up for the government to call for the laying of charges. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby made no charges, but he alluded to charges that have been made in the courts, and I suggest he has the right to ask that matters relating to those charges be cleared somewhere other than in this political arena.

Mr. Sharp: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think it has been one of the principles that you, your predecessors and all members have upheld, that when statements are made in the House either on the basis of newspaper reports or from third parties, some responsibility should be taken by those who use them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question which arises primarily from the point of order. Having in mind the intimations that have been made in the press and in other places outside this House, does the Acting Prime Minister not consider there have been sufficient prima facie allegations which justify—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Prima facie allegations!

Mr. Baldwin:—which justify the government, that has the responsibility for overseeing political turpitude and misdemeanors, taking the initiative to commence proceedings through an inquiry to determine exactly what the facts are?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, the answer again is in the negative. I do hope that hon. members opposite will let the course of justice continue and not engage in the kind of insinuation and innuendo which they are engaged in now, and which are laying the foundations for a series of pseudo allegations being made outside the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has raised on a point of order which was contributed to in the final analysis by a supplementary question put by the hon. member for Peace River. To keep the record straight, the fact of the matter is that the answer or its quality in relation to the suggestion that allegations of this sort ought to be backed up by the hon. member who poses the question, and any comments on the quality or the nature of the answer, are really legitimate causes for debate but do not constitute a point of order.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, my point of order arises from the last remarks of the government House leader, and relates directly to a specific question I tried to put through you to the Minister of Transport with regard to the first time that knowledge was obtained of the allegations made in the Hamilton harbour affair. The rules of the House under Your Honour's direction prevented the then minister of transport from answering a question which went back many months to an earlier time than anything we have heard today. I say to Your Honour, with all due respect, that the government House leader, in his insinuations and in his last remarks, completely overlooked the recent history that on the other side of the border there

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were both congressional investigations and court proceedings. Does the government House leader not make any distinction between criminal conduct and political misconduct, political stupidity or administrative incompetence?

● (1450)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Basically, the hon. member is returning to the same point. The fact of the matter is that if the President of the Privy Council or any other minister chooses to give an answer of that nature to any question at any time, the kind of answer given may be the subject of legitimate comment either inside or outside the House. However, the fact is that the kind of answer given by any minister is his choice, and in fact he can choose not to give an answer at all. So this does not constitute a point of order.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister, in alluding to one of my questions—and I got the gist of what he said if not the precise words—referred to vague allegations or press reports—I see he nods in agreement—on which he said I based my question. I want to put on the record that I did not base my question on some imprecise information. It is my understanding that charges have been made today, in the courts of Canada against Mr. Hugh Martin who, I understand, was a former chairman of the federal Liberal campaign committee and is a participant in the court proceedings on this important subject matter which has been the subject of political questioning in the House for some time.

Also on this point of order, I referred to charges that were laid, not by a politician but by an attorney of the Crown in Ontario. In his words, there was political influence peddling of some kind involved. That is why my point was not based on vague allegations or press reports but on serious charges made by serious people, and I put this question to the minister: would it not be in the best interests of politics in Canada to get away from partisan bickering of this kind—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent:—and have a public inquiry conducted by a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada so that we could get back to other important political matters in the House of Commons?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the best evidence of the impartiality of the proceedings that are now being followed is that this gentleman is being prosecuted.

Mr. Brewin: Speaking on the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I understand the Acting Prime Minister to have said that this matter should be left to the courts of justice. I want to point out that the cabinet of which he is a member has the authority to cause an inquiry to be conducted by a judge of the Supreme Court or any one else the government wishes to appoint to deal with any matter for the sake of good government of Canada. I want to suggest to the Acting Prime Minister that this matter, far beyond the criminal charges laid, involves the good government of the country.