

Question of Privilege

I think the sooner we can agree on a procedure to deal with it, the sooner we will get back to the business before us in the House of Commons.

This evening, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Lapointe made a proposal in the form of an amendment to a motion, which amendment I think was not officially before the house, because you had not ruled on it; but it was an amendment to a motion which has been before us. That amendment, the details of which I do not have with me, would provide for the submission of this question to a judicial committee for examination.

Now, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might be permitted to read the amendment. It is that we should:

—take such steps as are necessary to establish a judicial inquiry into the security case referred to by the Minister of Justice and by the Leader of the Opposition on March 4, 1966, at *Hansard* page 2211—

At which time, I might interpolate, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said—and I hope I am paraphrasing correctly—that he would be glad to have a commission of inquiry into this matter.

An hon. Member: That is not what he said.

Mr. Pearson: Then the amendment goes on:

—referred to by the Minister of Justice in a press conference on March 10, 1966—

At this conference the Minister of Justice—and I hope I am correctly paraphrasing his remarks—said he would have no objection to such an inquiry into this matter. Then the amendment goes on:

—and referred to in a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Calgary North at the commencement of proceedings this March 10, 1966.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that this amendment covers the situation very well. So far as the government is concerned, not only would we accept an amendment of this nature, if it were properly put before the house, for a judicial inquiry, we would welcome it.

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Prime Minister has accepted the proposition I made a little while ago that he should make a statement in respect of what the government was prepared to do in connection with this matter. I should like to point out to him and to the house, however, that in this matter I think time is of the essence. If there is going to be a judicial committee which will take two or three weeks to set up and which will then drag on for several weeks before

[Mr. Pearson.]

there is any clearing of the names and reputations of myself and the other members of the government of 1960-62, then I say it is not good enough. I think perhaps this might be the best way to deal with this matter, but I would like to be assured that this inquiry will be started immediately and that a report will be brought forward without a great many delays, so that the present situation will not continue to exist.

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friend has asked me for certain assurances in this matter, and I can understand his anxiety to have these assurances from the government. I can tell him this, that last Friday, I think it was, we agreed in respect of a judicial commission of inquiry which was pressed for strongly by the opposition, and within four hours, Mr. Speaker, we had that commission set up with a judge appointed and with terms of reference. I assure my hon. friend I will try to be equally quick in respect of this commission.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, the reference which the Prime Minister had to the recommendation of the Leader of the Opposition in respect of an inquiry is to be found at page 2211 of *Hansard* of last Friday, where his words are set out in the left hand column:

I am not worried. Have your commission look into it. Put it on the agenda.

We all know what he meant by those words; we were discussing a particular inquiry at that time into security matters involving the Spencer case. The other barrel that was fired by the Prime Minister and his Minister of Justice was into security procedures.

● (9:40 p.m.)

That was the other rug that was whipped out from under him. A judicial inquiry cannot remove from a member of this house, let alone a minister of the Crown, the responsibility of substantiating his charges.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: Only parliament can absolve a member of that responsibility.

An hon. Member: What are you trying to hide?

Mr. Nielsen: When parliament allows that to happen parliament ceases to exist.

Mr. Turner: May I ask the hon. gentleman a question? In respect of the charges the hon.