

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 18, 1966

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. NUGENT—OBJECTION TO STATEMENTS
BY DEFENCE MINISTER

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps before the minister proceeds with the statement which yesterday I invited him to make, I may say that the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona communicated with me earlier today and mentioned that he wanted, as he should have, to indicate the motion that he proposed to move if, yesterday, a question of privilege had been declared to exist by the Chair. This does complicate things a bit for the Chair procedurally, to have no question before the house and I submit that the hon. member should be allowed to read the motion which he should have read yesterday.

Mr. Terence Nugent (Edmonton-Strathcona): May I apologize to the house, Mr. Speaker, for overlooking this motion previously. I thought Your Honour would make a ruling on the prima facie case and I awaited the call of the Chair but I should not have. I should have indicated the motion; and since the minister can comment not only on the charge but on the motion he should have heard it.

If I may read it now in order to get it before the Chair, my motion is:

That the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona this day—

That refers to October 17, yesterday, and is the question of privilege found on page 8715 of *Hansard*.

—together with the charge, formally made on Wednesday, October 12, 1966, *Hansard* page 8577, against the Minister of National Defence, Hon. Paul Hellyer, be referred to the standing committee on privileges and elections to deal with and to inquire into the evidence and the witnesses before the standing committee on national defence during this session of parliament, and the practices and procedures involving witnesses, and evidence in appearances before the said committee, and in particular with regard to Admiral Landy-more's appearance and evidence, and should further report on the conduct and statements of the hon. member and the minister made in connection with this matter before the house and to the press.

Mr. Speaker: I would invite the Minister of National Defence to limit his remarks to the point of the question of privilege raised by the hon. member yesterday.

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. gentleman did not make his motion yesterday, or read the intent of his motion, I am not in a position to do anything except to comment in accordance with the invitation so graciously given yesterday in respect of the narrow point which had been raised by the hon. member when he rose on a question of privilege yesterday afternoon. The matter complained of appears on page 8715 of *Hansard*. First of all I should like to quote from the *Ottawa Journal*, Saturday, October 15:

It is apparent that he has had second thoughts and is now engaged in the complete "back-off" which substantiates my contention that the charge was "spurious" designed to damage my reputation rather than to get at the facts.

The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona then continued:

Those are Mr. Hellyer's words. The minister was speaking about me and his statement clearly imputes an improper motive. His words are so strong as to impugn my very honour and integrity.

• (2:40 p.m.)

The operative word in the quotation attributed to me in the *Ottawa Journal* is the word "designed". The Concise Oxford Dictionary, fourth edition, gives several meanings for the word "design", including "mental" plan; scheme of attack upon; purpose (whether by accident or)".

In order to be a genuine question of privilege based upon imputing motives, the allegation would have to be that the charge was designed deliberately or knowingly by the hon. member for the purpose of damaging my reputation. The use of the word "designed" by itself indicates quite clearly that the charge could have the consequences I described accidentally, rather than deliberately or knowingly.

I stated in the house on Thursday that I imputed no motive to the hon. gentleman; neither did I in the newspaper article referred to, nor do I now. I did not intend to impugn the honour and integrity of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona.