

up other matters which still remain to be investigated and which are included in the amended order. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this particular matter is fully covered by the amended order and can be brought before the commissioner by any person who may desire so to do, and that there is no necessity for the committee on Privileges and Elections to make a further inquiry. If, however, my hon. friend or those who are associated with him on the other side of the House feel that any right and proper purpose for maintaining the honour, dignity and integrity of this House or of any member or of any minister will be served by having the further investigation which he now suggests, then on behalf of the government I wish to say that we will be only too ready to have this motion pass.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this is an occasion and this is a subject which do not afford pleasure to any hon. member on any side of the House. It is very rarely indeed that questions of personal propriety as respects ministers or members come before parliament. Only once or twice in our history has it happened. On this occasion the proper course undoubtedly has been pursued by the hon. member for West Hastings (Mr. Porter). He has made allegations of conduct against a minister of the Crown, conduct inconsistent with the traditions and honour of parliament, conduct designated as improper in every case where similar questions have arisen in this or in the British House. He has taken the full responsibility, and in a speech temperate in tone and very fair in every aspect has laid his charges and made his motion. The motion is the right motion. The Privileges and Elections committee historically is the committee which always deals with any contested question affecting the privileges of parliament. There has never been a case in our history where, a charge being formally laid, the full responsibility being taken and a reference to this committee asked for, such a request or such a resolution has been negatived.

It is solemnly important on an occasion of this sort—it is indeed, imperative—that in this discussion the utmost fairness be manifested toward the minister accused—important because of the nearness of the whole subject to the fortunes of his career, to his personal self-respect; important also because he is necessarily and rightly absent during the debate. I take the Prime Minister's attitude to be not one of criticism of the method pursued but rather one of request to the mover of the motion that in view of two things the motion be withdrawn. The first fact upon which he

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

bases his request is that the accused minister has now returned the money, or purposes returning in full the money, which he wrongfully withdrew.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That is not quite correct.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Which it is alleged he wrongfully withdrew.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: No; my point is this: The hon. member said in presenting his motion that he was doing so, to use his own words, in the light of facts as they had been disclosed to him. My point now is that he has before him facts which he had not at the time he introduced the resolution and that in the light of those facts he might possibly not desire to press it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is exactly what I intended to say; the first of these further facts being the fact of the return, or prospective return, of the money, in response to a request from the liquidator of the bank. The second basis of the request is that, as claimed by the Prime Minister, there has been a commissioner sitting looking into Home Bank matters for certain purposes and that under the terms of the reference to that commissioner the hon. member might have gone to him, or might yet go, if he so desires, to press his case.

Dealing with the request and the double basis therefor, I want to draw to the attention of the House a very remarkable circumstance. We are here in the presence of a charge definitely made of misconduct, of personal impropriety on the part of a minister of the Crown; we have heard the statement of the minister, which statement, so far as I gathered from his words, contained no denial of the charge at all. This is a most extraordinary situation. The charge, mark you, is one undoubtedly of grave misconduct, misconduct that never can be cured by subsequent repentance or restitution; it was either wrong or it was not.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not think I should let my right hon. friend's statement that the minister admitted some charge made against him go unchallenged.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I did not say he admitted it.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: He denied it in his letter. He said clearly in his reply to the liquidator that his action was in the ordinary course of business.

Mr. MEIGHEN: That is not a denial to this House. Whether the minister intended