

Bill (No. 91) to amend the Act to enable the City of Winnipeg to utilize the Assiniboine River Water Power.—(Mr. Macdonald, Winnipeg.)

Bill (No. 92) to incorporate the Anglo-Canadian Electric Storage and Supply Company.—(Mr. Mackintosh.)

Bill (No. 102) respecting the Ontario and Quebec Appelle Land Company (Limited).—(Mr. Sutherland.)

PUBLIC WORKS DEPT.—CONTRACTS— MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Before the next Order is called, I desire to call the attention of the House to the fact that the Committee on Privileges and Elections, which was supposed to have been called, beyond all manner of doubt, for to-morrow, has not been called, and that rumours have been circulated to the effect that that Committee is not to be called to-morrow, but is to be called on Friday instead. I cannot but think that this is to be regretted for many considerations. We cannot ignore the fact that one of the leading members of this House is on trial before that Committee, and the dignity of the House demands that under circumstances of that kind, at least reasonable speed should be adopted by the Committee in its proceedings. Now, we know very well that for the convenience of members of that Committee, or a portion of that Committee, the Committee does not meet upon Saturday and it does not meet upon Monday; but it was clearly understood, and the understanding was expressed when the Committee had met once or twice, that we should meet *de die in diem*. It was afterwards suggested that, as many members would be away in Montreal and Toronto on Saturdays and Mondays, that understanding should not be carried out to the extent of meeting upon those two days, and while I myself yielded, and yielded very reluctantly to that conclusion, I think the understanding of the Committee was that on those two days we should not be called together, but outside of those two days it was clearly understood by all members of the Committee that the Committee should meet on every other day and proceed diligently with the important charge which this House entrusted to them. Sir, we have a large number of witnesses in attendance by virtue of the subpoenas we have served upon them in the Committee. The expense, no doubt, is comparatively trifling, hardly to be spoken of at all, but when one considers the magnitude, the gravity of the charges, and the position of the hon. gentleman against whom those charges are made, the serious character of these charges, and the inevitable conclusion that if they are proved they will result in the most serious consequences, one stands aghast in surprise at the fact that this Committee is not called to meet from day to day, but that its meetings are, it seems to me, to be postponed so far as it is possible to postpone them. I cannot, for one, assent or consent to this delay. I protest in the strongest language against this procedure. I think if the Government are responsible, they are to be blamed; I think if the Chairman of the Committee is responsible, he owes an explanation now to this House and to the Committee. I think the agreement which was come to has been broken. I think the hon. gentleman himself who stands charged before that Committee owes it to his own dignity to insist that that Com-

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mittee should meet at once and determine whether he is guilty or not. If he is innocent, why, Sir, it is the interest of the whole country, it is in the interest of this House, it is in the interest of its representatives, I won't say anything of his own interest—that his innocence should be proclaimed, and if evidence is given to justify any other conclusion, it is in the interest of the whole country that we should have that evidence given before us, and that this matter should be brought to a close. Sir, I cannot but think that, looking at the matter from a general standpoint, and looking at it from an outside standpoint, the Parliament of Canada does not occupy a dignified position. Its leader stands to-day impeached before one of its principal Committees, and that Committee ought to put all other considerations to one side, and proceed at once to determine the innocence or guilt of the hon. gentleman charged before it, instead of allowing his reputation to lie under a cloud. I will say no more upon that point, but I do say that the Committee has a right to insist that the understanding which was come to shall be carried out, and this House has a right to insist and to know why it is that that Committee does not proceed with the investigation of these serious charges.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. The hon. gentleman, in framing his protest, has used language which was utterly undeserved and inappropriate to the occasion. The hon. gentleman said that it was the fault of the Government, and he intimated—

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.). I did not.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. The hon. gentleman said so in exact words.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.). I did not. I said if it were the fault of the Government, they should be held responsible, and if it were the fault of the Chairman of the Committee, I should expect him to rise in his place and explain his conduct to the House.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. The hon. gentleman said that it was the fault of the Government.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No, no. Order.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. It will be entirely in vain for hon. gentlemen to say "No," and "Order." I am perfectly in order. I say that the hon. gentleman did impute fault to the Government in the matter—

Mr. LAURIER. I rise to order. My hon. friend beside me has stated distinctly that he made no such imputation. He said: "If it is the fault of the Government," and in face of such an explanation the hon. gentleman is entirely out of order in persisting to attribute to my hon. friend words which he declares he did not utter.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. The hon. gentleman—

Mr. LAURIER. I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. I have a right to speak to the question of order; I am going to speak to the question of order. I was interrupted by the hon. member, and I am speaking now to the question of order, and the hon. gentleman would not have pretended I was out of order if he had allowed me to finish my sentence. My statement was this, and I am speaking now to the point of order, and the hon. gentleman will see I am entirely in order: The hon. member from Prince Edward Island (Mr. Davies), who spoke, imputed