

if only to hear the account of the former solicitor general. As the result of such statements, implications of unkind innuendos, untrue and incorrect newspaper reports and headings have appeared and it is due to the irresponsibility of some Conservative members in the House that quite often certain media absolutely distort the facts. Mr. Speaker, we only have to refer to the decision you made yesterday and to quote a very clear excerpt. On page 1856 of *Hansard*, while rendering your decision whether there was a prima facie case for a question of privilege to allow the House to go further, you stated in your decision, I quote:

The complaint which is the subject matter of the question of privilege is not directly a complaint about the minister.

Mr. Speaker, it could not be clearer. I cannot understand how certain media and members could possibly disagree and suggest or print the following heading as did *Le Devoir*: "Member of parliament deliberately misled by Warren Allmand". Mr. Speaker, this is irresponsible and absolutely untrue as you mentioned in the House yesterday afternoon. Again, Mr. Speaker, I quote the ruling you made yesterday:

The complaint which is the subject matter of the question of privilege is not directly a complaint about the minister. Indeed, if it is founded on the fact that it is one of the minister's officials who has calculated to contrive this deliberate deception of the House.

Mr. Speaker, one has to be completely ignorant to interpret your statements and your decision as certain media did yesterday and in particular as a journalist of *Le Devoir* headed his article. The exact opposite happened in the House and it is an insult not only to the House but to all Canadians to say such unpleasant and unacceptable lies.

Mr. Speaker, another fact bears stressing. We should debunk what the Progressive Conservative members are trying to achieve with this question of privilege in the House. Nobody here wants to avoid truth, nobody wants to hide facts. We know that the McDonald commission exists under a federal act, I said so yesterday, and we all know that it is under the Inquiries Act and section 4 of that act that the commissioners are empowered to question ministers, to call them before them and to make recommendations about them once the inquiry is completed.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat in this House what I have already said: the former solicitors general who are directly or indirectly concerned by the activities of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for that period, all those former solicitors general and the present Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) are anxious to be called before the McDonald commission and tell their version of the facts, and more particularly former solicitor general Allmand. On February 15, 1978, before the Keable Commission in Quebec city, he already denied under oath, categorically and explicitly, that he had been aware the RCMP was tampering with letters at the time he wrote his letter to the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham. And this member, Mr. Speaker, has shown irresponsibility when he required

yesterday that a parliamentary committee be set up to enable former solicitor general Allmand to take position.

*Privilege—Mr. Lawrence*

Mr. Speaker, the former solicitor general has made his position clear. He has nothing to reproach himself; he categorically denies all allegations about irregularities and he is ready to testify again before the McDonald commission. Therefore it should not be suggested to the Canadian public nor insinuated in front of the people who watch us that the former solicitor general, his successors or the government want to hide the truth. On the contrary. They are prepared to testify before a democratic institution established under a law passed by this parliament. They want to do it in an atmosphere as objective as possible, Mr. Speaker, devoid of all petty politics and partisan tendencies, which would not be the case of a parliamentary committee where hon. members amuse themselves by taking out fragments of evidence and letters to make demagoguery of the worst kind, as was shown by the statements generally made by the Progressive Conservative members on this irrational question of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude my remarks by saying simply that the main reason why we on this side want this question of privilege to be dealt with is that we understand well the evidence, the parliamentary process and the well documented decision you gave yesterday. We know that whether there is a question of privilege or not is not decided by you but by the House. All hon. members will have to vote on the motion which is presently before us. All you have to do under the parliamentary procedure, and you explained this properly but apparently some media did not understand it, is to determine whether according to some allegations there is a prima facie case of privilege, whether superficially there is an important matter to enable the House to discuss the substance of the matter and to decide whether there is a question of privilege or not.

It is a little similar to a preliminary inquiry before the courts, Mr. Speaker. In the preliminary inquiry, the judge does not rule on the substance of the matter. If there are prima facie facts which lead to believe that charges should be laid against the accused, the doubt is at that time against the accused. It is only during the trial itself that the principle of the benefit of the doubt is in favour of the accused, and the preliminary inquiry enables the judge to observe prima facie evidence. We know very well that nine times out of ten, during the preliminary inquiry, the judge decides charges should be laid against the accused who is afterwards entitled to the benefit of the doubt, during his trial. By analogy, Mr. Speaker, that is what you did yesterday. You said, at first sight, I will not go into details, you will discuss it, the motion is debatable and you will settle the matter, for my part, I think that prima facie it is sufficiently founded, there is enough evidence to allow a debate on the matter to take place and I allow the hon. member for Northumberland-Durham to move his motion. That is all you did and it is correct, it respects the rules of