

Question of Privilege

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have always been a House of Commons man, and I made it clear there was no imputation. Your Honour still believes there was. That being so, following your ruling as always, I withdraw.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*Later:*]

MR. NIELSEN—REPORTED STATEMENT BY
PRIME MINISTER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. My question of privilege comes a little late because I did not have the material before me when the question of privilege was raised by the leader of the New Democratic party. It is based on the same ground, sir, as that raised by the leader of the N.D.P. and supported by the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Mr. Churchill: No, not "south".

Mr. Nielsen: I am sorry; "north centre".

Mr. Churchill: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be confused at any moment with the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

Mr. Knowles: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: Neither, sir, would I want to ever confuse the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre with the constitutional conscience of the House of Commons. The question of privilege I raise arises out of statements made by the Prime Minister to the Liberal council at a meeting he attended the day before yesterday. I have before me the *Ottawa Citizen* of Wednesday, June 3, where the words that were used by the Prime Minister are set forth in quotation marks on the first page. This is what was said by the Prime Minister, according to this newspaper report:

—"if the public's interest is made secondary to partisan tactics—no doubt by filibuster and by blocking public business, by politicking and polemics".

Further on it says:

"Today there is day after day of repetition and obstructing debate and raising of useless questions of order and privilege"—

An hon. Member: This is an example of a useless question of privilege.

Mr. Nielsen: I hear an hon. member say "This is an example of a useless question of privilege".

[Mr. Speaker.]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: I am sure there are many who share my view that the question raised a moment ago has the same basis of privilege as this one, because what the Prime Minister said to that meeting of the Liberal council imputed irresponsible motives to every member of this house.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nielsen: No member of this house, I submit to you, sir, let alone the Prime Minister, based on the precedent you yourself have established, can impute irresponsible motives to any member of this house. It seems to me, on the basis of the precedent you yourself have just set, sir, that the Prime Minister should have at least that much grace and that much understanding of the rules of the house as was exhibited by the leader of the official opposition, and should rise in his place now and withdraw the remarks he made, or assure this house that there was no imputation of motive, as did the leader of the official opposition; and he should inform the country accurately as to the rights of all members to exercise their duties. I appeal to you, sir—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is the hon. member concluding, because I think I get the drift of his argument?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nielsen: I appeal to you, sir, to treat this question of privilege with the same degree of seriousness with which you treated the question of privilege that was raised a moment ago.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nielsen: Perhaps hon. members opposite will cease their catcalling and allow me to make my closing appeal to you, sir, to make your decision on the basis of the precedent which has just been set in this house. The Prime Minister should be called upon to withdraw the imputations that he left, not only at this meeting of the Liberal council but as well in the minds of Canadians all across this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for his gallant diversionary activity. I am glad to confirm the words he has quoted, and