

Administration of Justice

• (3:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Halifax): As another new member of this house, and as a backbencher in the sense in which we still accept the word, I feel I must make one or two comments before I leave this chamber this afternoon. I share with my colleague from Digby-Annapolis-Kings the concern felt by all Nova Scotians and all Canadians about what is happening here in Ottawa today as well as what happened during the last three or four days.

I can no longer feel that high level of respect for this house that I felt when I came here less than two months ago. The events of the last few days are beyond understanding. We have done nothing except try to establish one single point. But the attempt has failed. The minister remains in his seat. I appeal to him for the sake of all that is human and all that is good: stand up and comply with the wishes of the majority of members in this House. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to go home today carrying with me any responsibility for the shame which has been brought upon this house and the members in it.

I have had conversations today with people in Nova Scotia. They are concerned. The press is concerned. All news media are concerned. Even the children in grade seven of the school in the village from which I come are concerned. There was a debate among children in grade seven in a small classroom in Nova Scotia today. They are curious. Why are they curious? Why should some 20 members of the Privy Council be subjected to this continuing and apparently unending doubt which has been cast upon them? These are moral questions, all of them. These men undoubtedly came here with much the same purpose as I did, to try to serve those people who wanted representation in this house and who were prepared to support them and show their faith in them.

I cannot sit here silent, so great is the indignation which swells up in me, first, because we are not doing what I came here to do. But more important than that, I cannot accept the position in which these men have been left; it is repugnant to everything I have always cherished. I know no level of ethical or moral responsibility which would accept the silence of the other side of the house.

Let us end this shadow of accusation which surrounds these honourable men. Let them, and let the Canadian people go home this week end able to rest assured once and for all

about the facts of this affair. I believe we should sit here until the Minister of Justice rises to his feet. Nothing is more important than the principle which has been violated in the past few days. If we are not prepared to do it, the Prime Minister must accept the responsibility of demanding—

An hon. Member: He has left the house.

Mr. Forrestall: He usually does that. Part of his nature in the last few days has been to face his responsibilities from outside the house. He always goes behind the curtain.

I say we must go on with the work we were sent here to do. By all means, let us get on with the business of this house. Let us get some legislation before us, and act. But I am not prepared, now, nor will I be six months from today, to act on anything in this house until the aspersions which have been cast have been cleared up.

I am not going to move from this house until we have heard from the minister. I do not think any hon. member can move from this house until this matter has been cleared up. I do not know how they can do so while these charges are hanging over the heads of every member on both sides of the chamber. The principle of the minister going outside this house to make charges is one which I do not cherish. Surely, the minister himself cherishes a higher sense of his responsibility than that. Let him name names. Then let us get on with the job we were sent here to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Royal.

• (3:20 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Everything seems to be at a standstill at the moment and it appears that the discussion will not advance further unless the names are given, at least according to what the two previous speakers have just said. Well, the names have now been revealed on the radio and in the newspapers. It is said—

Mr. Vincent: Who gave them?

Mr. Grégoire: Miss Olga was found and she gave the names. That being the case, does the question of privilege still stand?

[English]

Mr. Fairweather: On a point of order—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, the Chair is of the opinion that if the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) has a point of order he should state it now.