

*Hansard—Altering of Report*

As far as I can see, Mr. Speaker, the first is Your Honour. You have given rather a lengthy explanation as to the rules governing this matter and the way you were approached on it, and I think the phrase you used was that you thought the minister's request reasonable. I can quite understand that. I do not suppose the minister came running to you with his hands scratching his hair out in a frenzy saying, "Mr. Speaker, you must do something". Politicians do not do it that way. They come and say—I am imagining I would do it this way—"There has been a slight error in some figures I gave today, and I just wondered if you would mind if they were scratched out and the correct figures put in."

Of course, Mr. Speaker, you would say that was a reasonable request. As far as any pressure being brought upon you is concerned, I would not regard it as pressure at all. I would regard it in the way I have said. I can visualize the minister coming to you in some such fashion and saying that it is an innocent little correction and your saying, "Yes, that seems to be reasonable to me." I say the minister should not have gone to you in the first place with such a request. That is where the responsibility, to my mind, rests. If your suggestion that you submit your decision to the judgment of this house is carried out, Mr. Speaker, this group is going to vote confidence in you, because they believe that you do act reasonably in all cases.

The second person that might be involved would be the editor of the debates, and you have already paid a high tribute to the editor of debates. The applause in this house confirms your tribute to the editor, and our experience—some of us over a good many years—would lead us to applaud every editor of debates that we have known in the last number of years. So we would vote confidence in them.

Of course there is only one person left, and that is the minister. It took the minister 20 minutes to rise on his point of privilege, and I think he would have gone on if you had not interrupted. I am at a loss to know why there were not the usual bawls on the government side of the house when a point of privilege lasted more than about 10 seconds. Today it lasted for 20 minutes, and no member on the government side of the house objected at all. That will be the day when anyone on this side of the house takes 20 minutes on a point of privilege. However, that is only incidental. There are one or two things I should like to amplify. The minister himself said that he had gone to the editor of debates and the editor of debates

[Mr. Hansell.]

had said, "No, I am afraid we cannot delete a passage unless we get permission from the Speaker." The minister went to the Speaker, but there was another body of men to whom he went. He went to the press.

**Mr. Speaker:** May I suggest that in dealing with this point you might leave strangers out of the argument?

**Mr. Hansell:** The press may be strangers to some people but they are not strangers to the minister or to the government.

**Mr. Coldwell:** The minister went to the press.

**Mr. Hansell:** I hope I did not leave a wrong impression. The minister went to the press. It was the minister himself who first raised the matter by saying he went to the press. Now, I do not know whether we can conclude from that that there was any interference with the press, but the subject matter had gone over the wires and so nothing could be done about it. But this is not the first time that government members have gone to the press and tried to stop the press from publishing certain things. Members might talk about the freedom of the press and so forth, but let no person come to this corner of the house and accuse us of not believing in the freedom of the press.

The fact of the matter is that when the minister made his statement regarding the use of margarine by these institutions in our neighbouring province, somebody began to holler. It is not a matter of changing figures in *Hansard*; it is a matter of the minister's statement becoming a political issue in our neighbouring province. Somebody told the minister "You have to do something about this." The minister did do something about it, and it was the minister who yielded to some pressure. He did do something about it. He scratched it out of *Hansard*. He tinkered with the official record when it was not necessary to do so. The minister could have let the thing go just as it was, and he would have been better off if he had, because this criticism has gone into the press and has gone over the radio. Its importance, I think, has been highly inflated. All that could have been avoided by the minister letting the thing go, coming into the house today and rising on a point of privilege to say that he had made a mistake and that he should not have said this, correcting the figures and letting it go at that.

I shall not say any more except this. I think we have really said enough about the matter. We are not going to vote for the motion that has been proposed—

**Mr. Coldwell:** No motion has been moved. He could not move it.