

Administration of Justice

• (11:30 a.m.)

All the Prime Minister proposes to do is to set up an inquiry of which he will frame the terms of reference on the basis of a letter which was written by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cardin).

The Minister of Justice was very careful in that letter to refer only to his remarks which were made in the House of Commons. He makes no reference at all to the charges he made that this case would be worse than the Profumo case; that more than one minister was involved in the Munsinger case.

What the Prime Minister seeks to do now is this. Instead of having a proper investigation into the question of privilege, he is picking out carefully selected statements by the Minister of Justice on the terms on which he would like an investigation. I must tell the Prime Minister that he is not going to satisfy the members of this parliament or the people of Canada by having carefully framed terms of reference made in the corner by the government and passed by order in council, and using that as a substitute for a proper investigation.

I say to the Prime Minister that I think parliament is presenting a very unedifying spectacle to the people of this country, and the responsibility for this lies squarely on the Prime Minister's shoulders. One of his ministers has made very serious charges, charges which he says he makes without even having seen the Munsinger file. The minister either has to rise in the house and withdraw the statements he has made at a press conference, or he has to substantiate them.

As the man chiefly responsible for the conduct of this house and as leader of the government, the Prime Minister has a responsibility to see that ministers act with proper maturity and decorum. A minister of the crown, supposedly in possession of confidential information, cannot use his position to make wide accusations which reflect on the honour and integrity of other members. He has a responsibility now to urge his minister to do one of two things—withdraw his remarks or substantiate them. We are not going to be satisfied with an inquiry, the terms of which are drafted by the government.

If I understand Your Honour's ruling correctly, a motion on a question of privilege cannot cover the matter of an inquiry. It may be better to send this matter to the committee on privileges and elections, although I do not think this will satisfy anybody because it will probably just become a donnybrook. If the

[Mr. Douglas.]

Prime Minister wants an investigation, I say to the Prime Minister that he will have to have terms of reference which are acceptable to those in all parts of the house. The terms of reference will have to set out the charges made by the minister, not only in this house but outside the house. The minister will then have to appear before such an inquiry and substantiate his charges, and place his seat and his portfolio at the disposition of that inquiry. The terms of reference of the inquiry must be such as to cover the charges which have been made, and the letter read by the Prime Minister from the Minister of Justice certainly does not cover the very serious allegations made by the Minister of Justice the other day.

I hope the Prime Minister will try to settle this matter, and settle it quickly. We spent all day yesterday on this and it would be a terrible thing if parliament becomes another shambles today. I suggest that the Prime Minister agree to an inquiry of which the terms of reference include the charges made by the minister outside the house and the questions of privilege raised by members inside the house; that the terms of reference make it abundantly clear that it is the Minister of Justice who has to accept responsibility for substantiating before the inquiry the charges which he has made.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, my mind goes back to the other day when my hon. friend was in very hearty agreement with the policy of the government when it decided to draft an order in council in regard to a judicial inquiry. At that time there was no talk from him that such judicial inquiry was not what was required.

Mr. Starr: A name was named then.

Mr. Pearson: In previous cases an inquiry was instituted.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) is referring to a case in which I was involved—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): That was a case of allegedly fraudulent electioneering—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pearson: If I may be permitted to continue, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend became very indignant about charges being made without names being named. He has been in this house the last two or three years