

House of Commons

much more serious than one foresees at this moment in the midst of other proceedings. I repeat the suggestion I made earlier, that this matter for the moment be adjourned.

Mr. Drew: No, Mr. Speaker; with deference, I do not believe this should be adjourned. This matter has been brought before the house, the motion that has been presented is debatable, and I think this is the proper time to discuss the material that has been brought forward. There is, after all, nothing in the rules to indicate that such a discussion of a motion of this kind should be adjourned. I was referring to certain words in the letter that has been referred to, and I feel that, with respect to any decision that may be made, it is proper that hon. members should make some comments about this.

The letters have been placed before you, and certainly it must be a matter of concern to the members to form their own judgment as to the accuracy or otherwise of the statements that are made. Otherwise they could not properly pass judgment upon what has been said here. I had quoted a certain part in regard to the assault upon the very citadel of free institutions. The letter went on to say:

But at least it is within the letter of the rules. At least the rules themselves remain, for the protection of such vestiges of free discussion as still survive.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have seen here tonight certain arguments being put forward.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would the Leader of the Opposition be good enough to take into account the remark I made a moment ago, namely that remarks should be addressed only to the paragraphs which in my view are considered privileged. He cannot discuss the proceedings of today. He must address himself to the paragraphs in the documents that have been submitted that have been complained of and are considered privileged. We are not interested in any other matters.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that it is not only Your Honour who is concerned with what is said in these letters. It is every member of this house; and the conduct of this house is quite as important as the status of any individual or anything that may be said about the performance by any individual of his duties in this house, whatever those duties may be. I am not inclined to think that once matters of this kind have been placed before the house it can be said that only those things that refer to Your Honour are subjects which should be of concern to hon. members.

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Mr. Speaker: Order. I say only those matters which relate to privilege, and who decides what is privilege and what is not?

Mr. Drew: Then, Mr. Speaker, I am of course dealing with the last letter that was referred to, which is published in tonight's *Ottawa Journal*, and I would refer to the comments that are made there with regard to a motion presented by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). It speaks of the fact that this motion was presented. Then the letter goes on to say:

The Speaker admitted his right to do so. But he asked, rather plaintively (p. 4260), "How long am I going to act as if the Minister of Trade and Commerce should not have his motion put forward from the chair and therefore should not be recognized at all, so as to give how many hon. members the chance to move many intervening motions in the meantime?"

The answer is, of course, "Forever, if the motions are in order; not one minute if they are not." What other answer can there be? The rules are there. It is the Speaker's duty to enforce them, let the chips fall where they may. If this prevents the government from doing what it wants to do, it is just too bad for the government, but it is or should be a matter of complete indifference to the Speaker. If the rules are defective then the house can change them. Till it does the Speaker must enforce them as they are. He has no choice, unless he is to be recreant to his duty and his trust.

These statements, Mr. Speaker, refer as a matter of privilege to the position of Your Honour, and I should think they accurately state the position as it affects Your Honour. There can be no question about the right of any hon. member to use the rights that are available to him under the rules. In this particular case a question had been raised whether motions should be permitted, and there was some difference of opinion whether further motions could be presented. I submit that in this case what has been discussed here is a perfectly proper discussion of procedure in this house.

I think it is highly desirable that the position of Your Honour and the position of the other officials should be respected and should be positions of honour and trust. I submit, however, that it is neither improper nor an offence to this house for any member of this house to discuss the proceedings in the house in the way in which they have been discussed here, and I think what has been said can well be repeated.

If the rules are defective then the house can change them. Till it does the Speaker must enforce them as they are. He has no choice, unless he is to be recreant to his duty and his trust.

In view of those words, which I believe correctly set forth the situation, I must admit that I do not see how it would be reasonable for the hon. members of this house to condemn a letter such as the one to which I am